

**SCRIPTURAL ORGANIZATION  
OF THE  
CHURCHES OF CHRIST**

**BY  
JIM MASSEY**

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## PREFACE

Welcome to the study of *Scriptural Organization of the Churches of Christ*. This is an important study. The Bible has much teaching on it.

Each lesson will contain three parts: (1) the outline of the lesson (this is a short summary), (2) the body or discussion of the lesson, and (3) questions at the end.

Teachers should use the "drill" method of teaching. The short points of the outline should be explained one by one. This is possible if the body of the lesson has been read and understood well before class. Then after the outline has been discussed well, the points of the outline should be "drilled" or repeated many times by the whole class or by members in the class. Good practice of the outline will cause it to be memorized.

The questions at the end may be used in several ways: (1) Each student may answer them personally before coming to class. (2) The teacher may ask them after the class has understood the lesson well. Or (3) the student may be asked to write the answers after the class discussion. Teachers may choose whichever method they prefer or may vary the use of questions.

Students should use their Bibles to read and understand every verse listed. Remember

## **Preface**

that the Bible is the only authority in the churches of Christ. This study book may be incorrect, but God's Word is always true. This booklet is only to lead you to the Bible teachings on the subject of church government.

This book may be used for class or for private study. It is for members and for non-members. May all who use these teachings do so with prayer to God for wisdom. Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

The Author

## INTRODUCTION

I have known Jim Massey for many years. As a matter of fact, he was my Greek teacher while I attended Alabama Christian College in Montgomery, Alabama, U. S. A. Since that time, he has distinguished himself as a missionary in Nigeria and Trinidad. Along the way he also taught in Lubbock Christian College and Sunset School of Preaching, Lubbock, Texas, U. S. A., and he is presently teaching in the International Bible College of Florence, Alabama, U. S. A.

Having worked in different mission fields, and being faced with the lack of literature on numerous subjects to do the teaching that was so desperately needed, then he responded by doing a considerable amount of writing. As a result, his materials have found their way to many parts of the world where they are used with great success. This is the first book that we have printed here in India, with brother Massey as the author, but I am sure that others will follow. We express our appreciation to him for making this work available to us and we send it forth with the conviction that it will do a great amount of good.

Since the church is still young in India, and still in the process of growing up and becoming spiritually mature, then this book can do a great

## Introduction

amount of good as it encourages brethren to follow closely the scriptures in the organization of the church. The emphasis is not on some man-made system, but on the one that comes from the Lord. To be the church of Christ then we must follow the scriptural pattern. At the same time, this book will be good for our religious friends so they can not only see the scriptural organization of the church, but it will help them to see how foreign their church organization is to what the Bible teaches. Once one sees that difference, then surely he would prefer the Lord's way over man's way.

I would encourage you to read and study the chapters of this book along with the Bible. Actually, the author is attempting to direct you to God's word to enable you to see that this is what is taught on this subject. Questions have been added at the end of each chapter to help emphasize the most important points. It could therefore serve as a Bible correspondence course or a class book in a Bible school situation.

I am therefore delighted to commend this book to you and I pray that it may be widely used. If so it will surely prove to be fruitful.

J. C. Choate  
New Delhi  
Feb. 29, 1980

## SECOND EDITION INTRODUCTION

We printed this book in India to meet several needs. We encouraged a personal study of it, that it be used in class situations, and to serve as a Bible correspondence course. The church in New Delhi found it helpful as a text book for their Wednesday night Bible class. We have also been mailing it out to people all over India.

This book is ideal for mission work. It touches on every phase of church organization and answers all kinds of questions that are related to this theme. It shows what God requires of his people in the role of giving leadership to the church. I don't see how one could go through this material, along with his New Testament, without coming out with a scriptural concept of the organization of the Lord's church.

Because of the need for such material in so many places, with brother Massey's permission, we are printing this book here. Then we'll make it available at a low cost to people everywhere, even sending many of them to the mission fields of the world free of charge. We hope that this will be the means of helping many honest souls learn God's will concerning the church.

We invite you to read and study these lessons and then help us to get this book out to as many people as possible.

J. C. Choate  
Winona, MS  
January, 1985

## **CONTENTS**

Lesson 1	
What Is Our Authority In Church Organization? . . . . .	1
Lesson 2	
Why Should We Study Church Organization? . . . . .	6
Lesson 3	
Beginning Facts About Church Organization . . . . .	10
Lesson 4	
What Is The Church? . . . . .	13
Lesson 5	
What Is The Whole Church? . . . . .	18
Lesson 6	
How Is The Whole Church Organized? . . . . .	21
Lesson 7	
How Is The Church on Earth Organized? . . . . .	25
Lesson 8	
Who Were The Apostles And Prophets? . . . . .	29

## **Contents**

Lesson 9	
How Are Local Churches Organized? . . . . .	34
Lesson 10	
How Are Local Churches Independent? . . . . .	38
Lesson 11	
Why God Wants Congregations Independent . . . . .	43
Lesson 12	
How Does The Church Compare With Civil Governments? . . . . .	47
Lesson 13	
Why Do Men Follow Leaders? . . . . .	52
Lesson 14	
Why Is Exampleship Important In The Church? . . . . .	56
Lesson 15	
Who In The Church Are Examples? . . . .	60
Lesson 16	
What Are The Work Positions In The Church? . . . . .	66

## **Contents**

Lesson 17	
What Are The Names For Elders? . . . .	70
Lesson 18	
How Are Elders Often Mis- understood? . . . . .	75
Lesson 19	
How Denominations Corrupt Church Government . . . . .	79
Lesson 20	
How Churches of Christ Can Corrupt Church Government . . . . .	84
Lesson 21	
What Are The Types of Congre- gations As To Their Progress In Organizing? . . . . .	89
Lesson 22	
Qualifications of Elders (I) . . . . .	94
Lesson 23	
Qualifications of Elders (II) . . . . .	98
Lesson 24	
Qualifications of Elders (III) . . . . .	104



## **Contents**

Lesson 25	
Qualifications of Elders (IV) . . . . .	109
Lesson 26	
The Qualifications And Work of Deacons . . . . .	115
Lesson 27	
How Officers Are Not To Be Selected . . . . .	120
Lesson 28	
How The Holy Spirit Makes Elders . . . . .	125
Lesson 29	
God's Charge To Elders . . . . .	132
Lesson 30	
Danger Signs In Church Organization . . . . .	139
Lesson 31	
How Church Government Was First Corrupted . . . . .	146
Lesson 32	
How To Conduct A Business Meeting . . . . .	152

## LESSON 1

### WHAT IS OUR AUTHORITY IN CHURCH ORGANIZATION?

#### OUTLINE

1. *Not what seems best.*
2. *Not what others do.*
3. *Only the New Testament.*

#### DISCUSSION

1. *Not what seems best.* Every study must have some standard of authority. All questions must have some reliable source of answers. There must be a definite authority which all can depend upon to be right. Since our subject is a religious subject, we now ask, "What is our authority in the study of church organization? What standard will be used to be sure that questions will be given a correct answer?" Some will say that every man is left to choose what he may think is right in religion. "Just do what seems best," those people say. "Every person is his own standard. Follow any plan that works well."

But man's opinion is not God's standard in religion. The Bible says that it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps (Jer. 10:23). Man's way may seem right to himself, but the end thereof is the way of death (Prov. 14:12). Jesus said the commandments of men make worship vain (Matt. 15:9). Therefore, in any religious matter, man's opinion is no authority. In church organization many men will say that their plan is best. Others will claim that their method works best. But the opinions of men are not dependable. We cannot know the truth by asking what seems best to ourselves.

2. *Not what others do.* A second belief about religious authority is that what many people do must be correct. Those who believe in a certain plan of church rule will tell how many people follow that plan or how long their plan has been practiced. But this is another incorrect idea of authority in religion. The opinion of many men is no more reliable than the opinion of one man. Jesus said that many think they are right, but He does not know them (Matt. 7:22). Multitudes follow in false ways, but only a few follow the truth (Matt. 7:13, 14). The Israelites wanted a king so as to be like the nations round about them. But by trying to be like others they rejected God's plan of rule over His people

(I Sam. 8:5-7). The Church must not look at the people round about it and try to be like them. The church is a called out group (II Cor. 6:17). They are a peculiar people (I Pet. 2:9). Most of the corruptions that enter into the organization of the Lord's church come in because weak members want to be like the denominations around them. They desire the plans and methods which many people follow. But the things which others do is not God's standard of truth.

3. *Only the New Testament.* The only true standard of authority in religion is the New Testament. No catechism, book of common prayer, or creed has any religious authority. Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). He gave the Holy Spirit to guide His apostles into all truth (John 16:13). Thus, what is written in Scripture is inspired of God and is sufficient unto every good work for the Christian (II Tim. 3:16, 17). Men must not add to nor take from God's Book (Rev. 22:18, 19). All must abide in the teachings of Christ and not go beyond them (II John 9, 10). Men must not change or pervert the Gospel (Gal. 1:7-9). It must be understood, too, that the Old Testament is not an authority for Christians. It was only a schoolmaster until faith in Christ came, but now men are no longer under the schoolmaster (Gal. 3:

24, 25). The law was taken out of the way and nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14). Christians are under a new and better covenant, the New Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 8:6-13). Therefore, the Old Testament commands for harvest feasts or for assessing should not be used to authorize these things in the church today. This lesson on church government will honor the New Testament as the only inspired authority from God. The things written in these lessons must be checked from the Bible to see if they are so (Acts 17:11). Prove every teacher and every teaching by the authority of God's Word (I John 4:1). Today we do not find God's authority in men but in the Scriptures. Only what is proved from God's Book is proved by God. We must contend earnestly for the faith once for all given in the Bible (Jude 3). We must speak as the "oracles of God speak" (I Pet. 4:11). God is not the author of confusion but of peace (I Cor. 14:33). Those who respect God's authority will teach what the Bible teaches and refuse to teach anything not authorized in Scripture. God's people must speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent. They must do Bible things in Bible ways and call Bible things by Bible names. With proper respect for God's Word as the only standard of authority in religion, you are asked to study the following

lessons on church organization. Examine every Scripture from your own Bible. It is the Word of God and the Word of Truth (II Tim. 2:15).

### Questions

1. Does man's opinion have authority in religion? \_\_\_\_\_
2. List 3 references against following what men think right \_\_\_\_\_
3. Men's commandments make worship \_\_\_\_\_
4. Is the will of a multitude dependable? \_\_\_\_\_
5. List 2 references on many being mistaken \_\_\_\_\_
6. The Israelites wanted a king like the \_\_\_\_\_
7. List 2 references showing the church is separate. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Is God's authority today found in men? \_\_\_\_\_
9. List 2 references that show we must prove everything from the Scriptures \_\_\_\_\_
10. List 8 references on the true standard of authority in religion \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 2

### WHY SHOULD WE STUDY CHURCH ORGANIZATION?

#### OUTLINE

1. *Early departures from the faith were in organization.*
2. *Human pride easily corrupts any leadership.*
3. *Congregations are usually as good or as bad as their leaders.*

#### DISCUSSION

1. *Early departures from the faith were in organization.* The Bible predicted a falling away from the faith (I Tim. 4:1). Some would change and pervert the true Gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). The apostle Paul warned the elders of the church from Ephesus that they should take heed to the flock over which they were overseers (Acts 20:28). He told them to feed this flock (the church) or teach the members because false teaching would come. False teachers would arise

and lead away disciples from the church which Christ purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28-30).

We learn from church history that in only a few years this prophecy was fulfilled. Men began to depart from the faith. False teachers began to lead away followers. Church leaders began to rule in ways God never intended. They began the type of organizations found in the Roman Catholic church and other denominations. It was the leadership of the church that was first corrupted.

One of the first ways that men left the Bible was in the matter of church organization. Elders began to rule more than one church. Then "bishops" began to rule the elders. Men continued to change the Bible plan of church government until finally a Pope was elected. There is no Pope in the Bible, but men had departed from the faith.

There is always danger that men will corrupt the true organization of the church. Whenever departures came, they usually began in the leadership. This is why studying church organization is very necessary. By understanding how others have left the truth we can avoid their mistakes.

2. *Human pride easily corrupts any leadership.* Pride is the desire for self-glory. It is a



great temptation to any leader. When someone has a position, he wants a greater position. When a leader has some power, he wants more power. This is why leadership in the church is so easily corrupted.

Men are the same in all ages. Pride is a danger to every person. The mother of the apostles James and John wanted her sons to sit at either hand of Jesus in His kingdom (Matt. 20:20-28). The apostles were like men today, all men love authority. We want positions of prominence. Human nature will never change.

This is why the danger of corrupting God's plan for governing the church is a present danger. Men will often enter the church today in hopes of being leaders. Many others would become members if they were promised positions. Men usually are not satisfied to be humble servants in the church. Instead, many will seek the greatest power they can attain. They will corrupt God's plan in order to make a big place for themselves. Human pride easily corrupts church leadership. Therefore, this study is important.

3. *Congregations are usually as good or as bad as their leaders.* The apostle Paul realized this as he called the elders from Ephesus to speak to them (Acts 20:17-30). He knew that most churches follow good leaders and become strong

churches or follow weak or evil leaders to become bad churches. This is why the Holy Spirit's plan is for good elders or overseers in every congregation (Acts 20:28). Strong leadership makes a strong church.

But good leadership does not come without great effort. It is the result of much teaching and practice. Leaders of the people of God must be well-prepared and well-trained. Their work is the most important work on earth.

Paul instructed Timothy to commit the things which he had learned to faithful men who would be able to teach others also (II Tim. 2:2). Instructing men who can instruct others is God's plan of leadership. For these reasons, this study of the Bible teaching on church organization is very essential.

### Questions

1. I Tim. 4:1 predicted that some would \_\_\_\_\_ from the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Gal. 1:7 says some would \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Acts 20:17 shows that Paul called the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Acts 20:28 says he told them to take heed to \_\_\_\_\_ and to the \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Acts 20:29 says that \_\_\_\_\_ shall enter in not sparing the \_\_\_\_\_.

6. Does the Bible mention the Pope over the church? \_\_\_\_\_
7. In Matt. 20:20 the mother of \_\_\_\_\_ made a request of Jesus.
8. Is man's pride today dangerous as in former times? \_\_\_\_\_
9. II Tim. 2:2 shows that those taught will be able to \_\_\_\_\_
10. Good leaders produce \_\_\_\_\_ churches; bad leaders produce \_\_\_\_\_ churches.

### LESSON 3

#### BEGINNING FACTS ABOUT CHURCH ORGANIZATION

##### OUTLINE

1. *Every organization must have leaders.*
2. *Every organization must have followers.*
3. *Each group must give cooperation to the other.*

##### DISCUSSION

1. *Every organization must have leaders.*  
Jesus often had compassion upon the multitudes

which followed him because they were as sheep having no shepherd (Matt. 9:36). Even groups of animals such as sheep must have leaders. The same is true of groups of men. God saw that the family needed a leader, so he made the husband the head (Eph. 5:23). Nations must have rulers, and God has ordained that there be kings and governors (I Pet. 2:13, 14). Groups of laborers do much better work if they have good leaders. These things show us that God's plan for leaders in the church is a reasonable plan. Every organization must have leaders.

2. *Every organization must have followers.* Jesus said that every city or house divided against itself shall not stand (Matt. 12:25). Even with good leaders, every group must also have good followers. Following is as essential to the progress of an organization as leading. Somehow men do not consider followers as being very important. But what good are leaders without someone to lead? Followers need to be trained as to how to follow. God expects those who follow to be good followers. They must be taught how to follow.

3. *Each group must give cooperation to the other.* Good leaders and good followers know how to work well with each other. Leaders must

know well their work and followers, their work. Each also should understand what he is responsible for and what things he is not to do. Leaders should appreciate the place of followers, and followers must respect the work of leaders. This will bring a good relationship among all.

The Bible likens the organization of the church to a human body. The body has many parts, but all parts are necessary to the whole body (I Cor. 12:12). The foot should not feel unimportant just because it is not the hand (vs. 15). Neither should the eye say to the hand that it doesn't need the hand. Even the smallest parts are necessary and important in the body (vss. 20-26). Now these things are likewise true of Christ's spiritual body, the church (vs. 27). There must be no jealousy of leaders and followers. There must be consideration of followers by leaders. All members must work together by doing well the task which each is able to do. This booklet will be a study of leading, following, and cooperating together.

### Questions

1. Matt. 9:36 says the multitudes \_\_\_\_\_ and were \_\_\_\_\_ abroad with no leader.
2. Eph. 5:23 says the husband is head of the \_\_\_\_\_ .

3. I Pet. 2:13, 14 says to submit unto ordinances of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
4. Matt. 12:25 says every house \_\_\_\_\_ against itself cannot \_\_\_\_\_ .
5. I Cor. 12 likens church members to \_\_\_\_\_ of a \_\_\_\_\_ body.
6. Do laborers need leadership? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Is following well important in the church?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What word means working well together?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Are small members unimportant to the body? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What is the spiritual body of Christ?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 4

### WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

#### OUTLINE

1. *The church in the wilderness.*
2. *The whole church or body of Christ.*
3. *A local congregation.*
4. *An assembly.*

## DISCUSSION

1. *The church in the wilderness.* The word "church" means "a called-out group of people." It does not mean a building. Saul of Tarsus persecuted "the church" by persecuting "men and women" (Acts 8:1-3). Members of the church are the church. But not all men and women are the church, only those who are "called-out people." When the Bible uses the word "church" it is always speaking of a "called-out group of people." Stephen was preaching about the Israelites who were called out of Egypt into the wilderness. These people were called out of slavery and bondage, so he called them "the church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38). This helps us to see the true meaning of the word "church." Of course, this called out group was not the New Testament church of Christ. They were baptized unto Moses by crossing the Red Sea under the cloud (I Cor. 10:1, 2). The church which Jesus built did not come until after He came to earth and returned to heaven (Matt. 16:18). The religion of the Old Testament was the Jews' religion (Gal. 1:13, 14). It was not Christianity, but was a forerunner of Christianity (Gal. 3:24, 25).

Furthermore, the church which the Bible speaks of is not a denomination. There were no

denominations in the days of the New Testament church. All denominations have been begun by men sometime since Jesus built His church. Denominations are divisions begun by men contrary to Bible teaching that all be one (John 17:20, 21). These divisions first began to arise when believers began to follow their teachers (and wear their names) rather than Christ's (I Cor. 1:10-13). In the Bible, therefore, the church was always a called-out group of people. It was never a building nor a denomination. The church in the wilderness was an Old Testament called-out group of Jews.

2. *The whole church or body of Christ.* When we turn to the New Testament we learn of the church of Christ. Jesus said, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). The Bible says that this church was purchased with Christ's blood (Acts 20:28). He loved it and gave Himself up for it (Eph. 5:25). Every saved person is added by the Lord to this church (Acts 2:47). It is called the spiritual body of Christ, and He is its head (Col. 1:18, 24). This group made up of all Christians is truly a "called-out" group. They have been delivered out of darkness into the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13). They have come out from worldly things and have made themselves a separate people (II Cor. 6:17). This



called-out group the Bible calls the whole church or body of Christ.

3. *A local congregation.* Another way the New Testament uses the word “church” is to refer to a local group of Christians. This is a congregation of called-out people in one village or city. We read of “the church of God which is at Corinth” (I Cor. 1:2). We find that the “seven churches which are in Asia” are seven congregations in seven Asian cities (Rev. 1:11). Paul sends greetings from local congregations when he says, “The churches of Christ salute you” (Rom. 16:16). A group of called-out believers in any location is a local church.

4. *An assembly.* A fourth way the Bible uses the word “church” is to speak of an assembly. When people are called out of their houses to enter an assembly, they are called a “church.” Remember that “church” always means a “called-out group.” Paul speaks of the “church” coming together in I Cor. 14:23. He says that women must keep silence in the “churches” (assemblies). It is a shame for women to speak in “the church” (the assembly), vss. 34-35. The assembly is a called-out group of Christians who have come together in a meeting.

These are the four ways the Bible uses

the word "church." Always a "called-out group of people" is meant. Please remember these four uses as we study church government further. And let us always speak where the Bible speaks, and be silent where the Bible is silent. Much confusion can be avoided by speaking of the church only as the Bible speaks of it. Let us discard the ideas of churches which are not found in the Bible.

### Questions

1. "Church" always means a \_\_\_\_\_
2. What was the church in the wilderness called out of? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Was the church in the wilderness the same as the church of Christ? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Were denominations founded by Christ? \_\_\_\_\_
5. John 17:21 says to be one as \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are one.
6. I Cor. 1:10 says have no \_\_\_\_\_ among you.
7. II Cor. 6:17 says "be ye \_\_\_\_\_, saith the Lord."
8. I Cor. 1:2 speaks of the church of God at \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Which church must women keep silent in? \_\_\_\_\_.
10. The whole church is called the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ.

## LESSON 5

### WHAT IS THE WHOLE CHURCH?

#### OUTLINE

1. *Each Christian in subjection to Christ, the head.*
2. *Every member equal under Christ.*
3. *Love, interest, and cooperation among all.*

#### DISCUSSION

1. *Each Christian in subjection to Christ, the head.* The last lesson taught that the whole church is made up of every Christian in the world. The whole church is the spiritual body of Christ made up of all members of all congregations. Jesus is the head of this great body of believers (Col. 1:18, 24). Christ is the only head of His body, just as our human body has but one head. Every Christian is subject to Christ the head, just as all parts of our physical body obey the head. Christ Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18). He gives His instructions to His body through His Word, the

Bible (Matt. 28:19). Every true Christian in all the world is in subjection to Christ, the head, and is a part of His spiritual body, the church.

2. *Every member equal under Christ.* As members of the body of Christ, all Christians are equal. They have no head but Christ. They are under no authority but His Word. No member has any authority, power, or position over any other member in the whole church. No member or group of members controls other members. All are equal under the head who is Christ. There are different abilities given, but no superiority (I Cor. 12:4-6). There are different tasks according to one's abilities, but no member is elevated above any other (I Cor. 12:12-24). Every member in the whole church or body of Christ is equal under Christ, the one head.

3. *Love, interest, and cooperation among all.* All Christians love all other Christians as brethren. They are all in the same family of God (I John 3:1). All members are interested in the proper functioning of all other members. All are parts in one body (I Cor. 12:12, 13). All races and tribes are equal in the body of Christ, and women are as valuable in God's sight as men (Gal. 3:26-28). As fellow members of the same body, Christians are interested in members of

all congregations. There must never be any type of division in Christ's body (I Cor. 12:25). All members have the same care one for another. If one member suffers, all other members suffer with it. If one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it (I Cor. 12:25, 26). When one part of our human body is wounded, the whole body is concerned about it. Likewise in the spiritual body of Christ we are all members one of another. We must have love, interest, and cooperation for all other members in the whole body of Christ.

### Questions

1. Col. 1:18 says Christ is head of the \_\_\_\_\_  
or \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. Matt. 28:18 teaches that Christ has \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ .
3. How many heads does Christ's body have?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Are all members equal in the body of Christ? \_\_\_\_\_
5. I Cor. 12:5 says we all have the same  
\_\_\_\_\_ .
6. Is every member important in the body of Christ? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Does one's race make one greater? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Is a woman as valuable to Christ as a man?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Are members of different congregations all in one body? \_\_\_\_\_
10. I Cor. 12:25 says to have no \_\_\_\_\_ in the body.

## LESSON 6

### HOW IS THE WHOLE CHURCH ORGANIZED?

#### OUTLINE

1. *No government on earth.*
2. *No headquarters on earth.*
3. *Any attempt to organize the whole church is sin.*

#### DISCUSSION

1. *No government on earth.* The whole church or body of Christ has no government on earth. It has a heavenly head and heavenly authority (Matt. 28:18). In this way it is different from denominational churches. They have an earthly head such as a Pope or Archbishop. Their

authority is the authority of men written into catechisms and prayer books by councils and conventions. But the Bible calls no man head but Christ (Eph. 1:21-23). The body of Christ has no earthly organization with officers over all members. It has no districts or synods or divisions. Its members do not come together in conventions to decide its affairs. These are all corruptions and changes which men have brought. Instead of any earthly connection with other members, all Christians have a spiritual union with one another and with Christ. Every Christian and every congregation is independent and free under Christ. The whole church or the body of Christ has no government or organization on earth.

2. *No headquarters on earth.* A headquarters is the quarters of a head. Since Jesus is the only head of His church, heaven is its only headquarters (Heb. 12:2). Denominational churches have central earthly headquarters. The head lives at these centers and controls all parts of the denominations. This shows another difference between the Lord's church and churches founded by men. No large church compound or school compound is the center of the Lord's church. The first congregation planted in an area is not more important than others. There is no

payment of fees to any earthly headquarters. No center sends out preachers or changes their stations. There is no site where all members in a section come together for regular conventions to decide the policies of the churches. Instead, heaven where Christ is head is the only center of churches of Christ.

3. *Any attempt to organize the whole church is sin.* Men and congregations may often try to give the Lord's church a denominational government. A large church may try to rule smaller churches in its area. This desire could lead to trying to organize the whole church in nations. Because many members were formerly in denominations, it is difficult for them to forget their human church governments. They like large conventions. Men like to control many churches. They want offices and officers like the denominational churches around them. But these things violate true church organization. They corrupt the pure government of the church which is found in the Bible. We must not go beyond the doctrine of Christ's Word (II John 9). We dare not change the Gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). We must not add to nor take from the Bible plan (Rev. 22:18, 19). Any attempt to organize the whole church is sin.



## Questions

1. Where does the head of the church live?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Is Christ's church divided into districts?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Eph. 1:22 says Christ is head over \_\_\_\_\_
4. Heb. 12:2 says Christ is at the \_\_\_\_\_  
of God's throne.
5. Do denominations have earthly centers?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. II John 9 says he that \_\_\_\_\_ not  
in the doctrine of Christ has not \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Gal. 1:7 says some would \_\_\_\_\_ the  
gospel of Christ.
8. Rev. 22:18 forbids \_\_\_\_\_ to the  
words of God's book.
9. Rev. 22:19 forbids \_\_\_\_\_ away  
from the words of God's book.
10. Is the body of Christ organized on earth?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 7

### HOW IS THE CHURCH ON EARTH ORGANIZED?

#### OUTLINE

1. *Only the local church is organized on earth.*
2. *All Bible teaching on permanent church government concerns the local church only.*
3. *There are no officers on earth outside the local church.*

#### DISCUSSION

1. *Only the local church is organized on earth.* The previous two lessons showed that the whole church had no permanent earthly organization. Only the local congregation has officers and organization today. The apostle Paul called the elders from a local church, Ephesus (Acts 20:17). He said that they were to take heed to the flock or church over which the Holy Spirit made them overseers (Acts 20:28). The Holy

Spirit makes men overseers of a local congregation only. Never does the Bible say that there are to be overseers of the whole church or body of Christ. In I Pet. 5:2 elders were told to feed the flock of God which was among them. They had no responsibility as elders except in the local congregation where they were overseers. These Scriptures show that God has planned for officers only in local churches. Sometimes men may think that their plans for organizing the church are better. Many would like to organize the whole church today. But the foolishness of God is wiser than men (I Cor. 1:25). There are many good reasons why only local churches have organization. Men must respect God's arrangement and honor God's wisdom and follow God's plan. Only the local church is organized on earth. The whole church is not.

2. *All Bible teaching on permanent church government concerns the local church only.* Whenever the Scriptures speak of permanent offices and officers in the church, the local church is referred to. In the beginning of the church, before the Scriptures were completed, there were special officers of a temporary nature. In I Cor. 12:28 the Bible shows that God set some in the church, "first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles,

then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” But the gifts of the Holy Spirit which enabled the working of miracles were temporary. I Cor. 13:8-10 teaches that when God’s perfect revelation, the Bible, would come, the partial revelations would cease. When miraculous gifts ceased, the permanent officers of the church continued. The positions in the church which God planned to continue did not depend upon miraculous power. When we read the qualifications for elders in the church, the power to work miracles is not mentioned. Men can be elders without miracle-working power.

All permanent church offices were for the local church. Temporary apostles and prophets over the whole body of Christ soon ceased. But elders were ordained in every church (Acts 14:23). Titus was left in Crete to ordain elders in every city (Titus 1:5). These verses show that elders were for the local church only and not for the whole body of Christ. The elders from Ephesus were to take heed to the flock over which the Holy Spirit had made them overseers (Acts 20:28). This flock was the local congregation at Ephesus (Acts 20:17). Elders are commanded to tend the flock of God among them (I Pet. 5:2). They have no authority over the whole church. As we proceed further to study the permanent organization of the Lord’s

church, we will find teaching only for local church officers. All Scriptures which deal with permanent church government deal with the offices in the local congregation.

3. *There are no officers on earth outside the local church.* Jesus Christ is still the heavenly head of the church. The Lord's apostles and prophets continue to have a prominent place in the church because we still follow the authority of their inspired words. But these officers over the whole church are in heaven. They have no representatives or successors on earth. All church officers today are in the local church. We know this from the silence of the Scriptures. The Bible gives absolutely no instruction for officers other than in the local church. Since the Bible thoroughly furnishes us unto all good works, we know that God meant the whole church to have no over-all officers (II Tim. 3:16, 17). Where the Bible speaks, we speak; but where the Bible is silent, we must be silent. We must abide in the doctrine of Christ and not go beyond what is written (II John 9).

### Questions

1. Acts 20:17 says Paul called the elders of
-

2. Acts 20:28 says they were to tend the flock over which they were made \_\_\_\_\_
3. I Pet. 5:2 says tend the flock \_\_\_\_\_
4. Is the whole church organized on earth?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Permanent officers are only in the \_\_\_\_\_ church.
6. What perfect revelation stopped miracles?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Must elders work miracles to be elders?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Acts 14:23 says elders were ordained in \_\_\_\_\_ .
9. Titus 1:5 says elders were ordained in \_\_\_\_\_ .
10. Are there earthly officers today outside the local church? \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 8

### WHO WERE THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS?

#### OUTLINE

1. *They were special officers in the foundation of the church.*
2. *Their miracle-working power has*

*ceased.*

3. *They were temporary, not permanent, officers.*

## DISCUSSION

1. *They were special officers in the foundation of the church.* All things on earth began with miracles. Man and the world were begun with miracles. But today man and the world continue by God's natural plan without miracles. In like manner, the church began by miracles. But the church is spread and continued today by God's plan without miracles. The Word of God was first brought by miracles. But we now have the Bible which can be taught without the need of present-day miracles.

The apostles were special miracle-working officers in the beginning of the church. God gave them special powers to reveal His Word and to serve in the foundation of His church. Jesus promised that the apostles would be guided by the Holy Spirit into "all truth" (John 16:13). Apostles and prophets were necessary as part of the foundation or beginning of the church (Eph. 2:20). The Bible says that men such as apostles and prophets were set by God first in the church (I Cor. 12:28). Their miracles were signs that they were apostles (II Cor. 12:12). Their miracles

confirmed that their preaching was from God (Heb. 2:3, 4). These offices and officers were necessary for the beginning of the church. But their position and their miracles are not necessary today.

2. *Their miracle-working power has ceased.* We know that there are no more apostles in the church on earth today because all miraculous powers have ceased. It was God's plan that miracles would cease when their purpose was accomplished. Prophecies, speaking in tongues, and miraculous knowledge were to be done away (I Cor. 13:8-10). These all were to fail or cease after the perfect revelation of God came which was the Bible. God gave these gifts only until the faith as a unit was completed (Eph. 4:8, 11-13). Now that the Bible is completed we have the perfect knowledge of the Son of God. The faith has been once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). The fact that Jesus is the Son of God has been once forever proved by miracles (John 20:30, 31). A thing once proved does not need to be repeatedly proved. The truth of the Word of God has once for all been confirmed. A truth once confirmed is forever confirmed. Today the Scripture thoroughly furnishes us unto all good works (II Tim. 3:16, 17). The miracle-working power of the apostles has ceased because



its purpose has been accomplished. Since the power of the apostles has ceased, there are no more apostles on earth today.

3. *They were temporary, not permanent officers.* Miraculous gifts were given for the miraculous beginning of the church. These gifts gave men the power to be apostles and prophets. But the gifts of miracles have ceased, and prophecy has been done away. Therefore, there is no power today for apostles and prophets, and there is no need for modern apostles and prophets. These offices were never meant to be permanent. God never intended for apostles and prophets to have successors. Their position was necessary only for the founding of the church, not for the spread of it. Because we believe the Bible, we believe that miracles happened and that the apostles and prophets lived. For the same reason we believe that miracles ceased and that apostles and prophets are no more. The Bible clearly teaches that miracles happened and that miracles ceased. The Bible clearly shows that apostles and prophets were given and that apostles and prophets were taken away. The same Bible teaches both. This is why we find no apostles and prophets in the church today. These were temporary and not permanent offices. Anyone claiming to be apostles or prophets today are

false (Rev. 2:2). Even from the beginning there were false apostles (II Cor. 11:13). Men will always appear with false miracles and lying wonders (II Thess. 2:8, 9). Many will claim to perform signs and mighty deeds, but Jesus never knew them (Matt. 7:22, 23). Apostles and prophets were temporary, not permanent officers in the early church.

### Questions

1. Does the Bible teach that miracles were once performed? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Does the Bible teach that miracles would continue? \_\_\_\_\_
3. John 16:13 says the apostles were guided into \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Eph. 2:20 says apostles and prophets were in the \_\_\_\_\_ of the church.
5. I Cor. 12:28 says God set some in the church, \_\_\_\_\_ apostles.
6. II Cor. 12:12 says the apostles showed \_\_\_\_\_ of an apostle.
7. Heb. 2:3, 4 says God was bearing witness with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Jude 3 says the faith was \_\_\_\_\_ delivered to the saints.
9. Rev. 2:2 speaks of what type of apostles?  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. Were apostles and prophets permanent officers? \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 9

### HOW ARE LOCAL CHURCHES ORGANIZED?

#### OUTLINE

1. *Each congregation is autonomous or independent.*
2. *Officers rule in only one local church.*
3. *Congregations are not organized together.*

#### DISCUSSION

1. *Each congregation is autonomous or independent.* Churches of Christ are free from denominational rule. They are striving to go strictly by God's plan for the church, the Bible. They are pleading for an exact reproduction of the church as it was in the New Testament. They are working to restore every part of the Lord's plan for His church. One of these important parts to be restored is the Scriptural organization of the local churches. When we learn the true

nature of government in the New Testament church, let us follow this exact type of rule today. The previous lesson showed that all Scriptural officers for the church are in the local congregation today. It was learned that no officers exist on the earth outside the congregations. These congregations are under no board or ruling committee. Each is supplied with its own officers from the congregation itself. No higher outside body rules the churches.

The word "autonomous" means "self-rule." An autonomous church is one which governs itself. It has no outside higher power over it. It selects its own officers, arranges for its own evangelist, manages its own finances, and disciplines its own disorderly members. It is in every way independent of outside human supervision. It is subject only to Christ. Its book of authority is the Bible only. It conducts its own worship services, business meetings, and work programs. Each local church must be autonomous or independent in order to restore New Testament church government today.

2. *Officers rule in only one local church.* One of the first departures from Scriptural church government came when officers began to rule in more than one congregation. This change from the Bible plan soon led to district officers

over churches in certain areas. These practices later led to a Pope. In order to restore the Bible plan of government, officers must not function in more than one congregation. God's plan if followed prevents the departures that led to the Roman Catholic church. Most Protestant churches also have officers who rule more than one church. These have many titles such as "agents" or "traveling bishops." Their work is to supervise several local groups. They often travel from church to church in their district or area. But Scriptural officers must rule in only one local church. Large churches of Christ are tempted to want to rule smaller and younger congregations. Township churches may try to govern the affairs of neighboring churches in the bush. They may send their elders to rule weaker churches. But this is a denominational plan. It is a step toward corrupting the church organization. A congregation cannot be truly independent if officers from another church try to oversee it.

3. *Congregations are not organized together.* Many members of churches of Christ formerly spent many years in denominational churches. This long experience keeps them from a good understanding of true church organization. They want churches of Christ to be organized together as their former churches were.

Therefore, they like conventions of several churches in an area. They want organized groups with officers and treasury. They often practice "combined services" which disrupt their local services. But no congregations in the New Testament were joined together. Each was completely independent in organization. Christ wrote seven letters to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 1:11). Each church was sent a separate letter. Even though the congregations were in the same area, there was no organization of churches. There was no group of officers ruling over all seven churches. Each congregation in each city was independent. When the New Testament plan of church government is followed, congregations will never be organized together.

### Questions

1. A word meaning "self-rule" is the word \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Does the Bible speak of "agents" and "traveling bishops?" \_\_\_\_\_
3. Rev. 1:11 says letters were written to the seven churches of \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Former denominational practices make brethren want to combine \_\_\_\_\_ together.
5. Should older and stronger churches govern weaker ones? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Does the Bible speak of a ruling committee over many churches? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Were churches in the New Testament organized together? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What word means to reproduce something as it was in the beginning? \_\_\_\_\_
9. District officers later led to a \_\_\_\_\_
10. II John 9 says if we \_\_\_\_\_ and abide not in the doctrine of Christ, we have not \_\_\_\_\_ .

## LESSON 10

### HOW ARE LOCAL CHURCHES INDEPENDENT?

#### OUTLINE

1. *Self-governing.*
2. *Self-supporting.*
3. *Self-propagating.*

#### DISCUSSION

1. *Self-governing.* One important way that congregations are independent is in governing themselves. This has been shown in the last

several lessons. Losing the right of self-government is a certain way for a church to lose its independence. When a church ceases to govern its own affairs, it will soon lose all other forms of its independence. When other men take over the rule of a church, it has lost its true autonomy. But governing its own matters is not the only form of independence in a local church. Many churches make their own decisions but still continue permanently to depend upon outside help in finance and other matters. Self-rule should lead a church to self-support and complete independence.

One important difference must be understood here, however. A congregation can never receive outside rule without losing its independence. But a church can receive temporary outside support without losing its independence. We know this from the Bible. There is absolutely no example of any congregation in the New Testament receiving rule from outside persons. But we do read of congregations receiving temporary financial help and spiritual help from outside. Elders or overseers in Judea received temporary financial aid from Antioch (Acts 11: 27-30). Paul received wages of other churches while preaching in Corinth (II Cor. 11:8). The church at Philippi sent once and again to Paul's needs in other localities (Phil. 4:15, 16). There



are, therefore, Bible examples of temporary outside financial help, but no examples of outside rule, temporary or otherwise.

2. *Self-supporting.* Another way that God intends churches to be independent is in self-support. Paul commended the church at Philippi for supporting him financially even “in the beginning of the Gospel” (Phil. 4:15). A congregation is not fully independent as God wants it to be until it supports itself financially. Temporary aid may sometimes be necessary, but self-support must soon be reached. Whenever outside support is received, there is danger that outside rule will be practiced. Some churches even try to allow others to make their decisions for them. Congregations must stand on their own feet.

Parents teaching a baby to walk must require it to take steps for itself. If the baby does not try to step alone, it will never learn. But with every independent step, it is learning better to walk alone. Likewise, a congregation must take steps for itself even from the beginning. As long as others carry it financially it will never walk alone. But the more steps it takes for itself, the more it learns that it can walk by itself. It is learning self-support by experience. A mother chicken also has to teach baby chickens self-support by experience. As long as she finds all

the food and feeds her chickens herself, they will not learn independence. But when she forces them to learn to feed themselves, they soon grow independent and strong. Although some chicks will refuse at first to feed themselves, the mother hen will even fight them to drive them to find their own food. They soon learn that self-feeding is the best plan. In like manner, some congregations must be forced to support themselves. Some may even require rebuke to teach them self-support. But when they really try, they see that they can do much better than they had thought. They will then grow and prosper. True independence includes self-support.

3. *Self-propagating.* This word means self-continuing. A self-propagating congregation promotes itself and spreads the Gospel which plants other churches. The Word of God is the seed of the kingdom or church (Luke 8:11). Any seed has within itself the life necessary to bring forth another plant. So also does the Bible have the necessary power to produce and promote the church. Wherever good hearts will receive the Word, congregations will spring up. A congregation needs no outside organization to enable it to grow or to plant other churches. In this way each congregation is like a banana tree. Once it is planted, it has the ability to grow without

outside care. It will also soon cause new banana plants to spring up. This is the meaning of self-propagation. The Bible says that the church is the pillar or support of the truth (I Tim. 3:15). Each congregation is to support and spread the truth. This then will cause other churches to be planted. They also will support the truth in other areas. The church at Jerusalem scattered and went everywhere preaching the Word (Acts 8:4). Outside mission agencies or denominational organizations are unnecessary to the spread of the Lord's church. Congregations of the Lord's church are independent by being self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating.

### Questions

1. Is it scriptural for a church to receive temporary outside rule? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Is it scriptural for a church to receive temporary outside support? \_\_\_\_\_
3. II Cor. 11:8 says Paul received \_\_\_\_\_ of the churches.
4. Phil. 4:15, 16 says Philippi sent \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to Paul's need.
5. Phil. 4:15 says Philippi sent to Paul from the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Gospel.
6. Two good illustrations of learning self-support are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

7. Self-propagating means \_\_\_\_\_
8. Luke 8:11 says the Word is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ .
9. I Tim. 3:15 says the church is the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of the truth.
10. Acts 8:4 says that the disciples went \_\_\_\_\_ preaching the \_\_\_\_\_ .

## LESSON 11

### WHY GOD WANTS CONGREGATIONS INDEPENDENT

#### OUTLINE

1. *Develops leaders and members.*
2. *Promotes giving and working.*
3. *Prevents the spread of apostasy.*

#### DISCUSSION

1. *Develops leaders and members.* Even if we could not understand why God wants autonomous churches, we would still need to obey Bible authority. But we can see many good reasons why God's plan for independent congregations is best for the churches. One reason is that it develops the leaders and members in each

church. Whenever the leaders for a congregation are brought in from outside, local leaders will not develop themselves. Whenever a congregation's work is done for it by some outside group, the members of the church do not develop as quickly. Christianity should bring out a person's best abilities. God has designed the organization of the church to develop members of each congregation to the fullest extent. If the men in a local church feel that their leaders will be sent to them and their decisions made for them, they do not try as hard to do their own part. Denominational church organization discourages congregational development. In Rom. 15:14 the apostle Paul commended the brethren at Rome for being filled with goodness and knowledge, and for being able to admonish one another. These men had developed themselves in an independent church. But in Heb. 5:12-14, members are rebuked for having not developed themselves. These members had been in the church for a long time but were still unable to teach. They are told that they need exercise or experience in teaching. We learn to teach by teaching. Leadership in the church requires experience. God wants congregations to be dependent upon themselves for leadership so as to develop leaders best and most quickly.

2. *Promotes giving and working.* Denominational plans of finance and organization often require money to be sent to headquarters. But in autonomous churches of Christ there is no such earthly headquarters. The financial plan is for each church to use its own collection in the local work of the Lord or to decide for itself where the money will be used. No supervising officers nor headquarters organization must be supported. This plan stimulates better contributing. If a member knows that all money which he gives into the contribution will be used for building up the local church, he should be willing to give more. He can see the need clearly in his own village. He sees how badly his money is needed. He feels a sense of accomplishment to see these needs being met by his donations. The best way to encourage sacrificial giving is to keep a strong need before the givers. God's plan for finance in the local church provides this incentive to the giver. God's arrangement likewise encourages more personal interest in the entire work of the church. Every member can see that no mission organization is going to do the work of the church for him. He himself is responsible. If the work is done he must do it. This keeps the responsibility on the local members instead of on some other group. God's plan for independent congregations is the best plan for promoting giving and working.

3. *Prevents the spread of apostasy.* If several large stones are tied together along portions of a piece of rope, they are not independent, but rather are joined together. If any one of these stones falls into a stream, it will pull all of the stones in with it. But if the stones are not tied together, when one falls, the others will not fall. They are independent. This comparison illustrates another reason for autonomous churches. Denominational organizations tie churches together and take away their independence. If one congregation apostatizes, it will pull others along with it. Or if the supervising officers teach false teaching, all the churches will follow because they are all joined together. God's plan is best because it prevents the spread of apostasy and false teaching. Even if many congregations begin an unscriptural practice, other churches will remain faithful because they are independent. God wants independent congregations because this plan best develops leaders and members, promotes giving and working, and prevents the spread of apostasy.

### Questions

1. Rom. 15:14 said members were able to \_\_\_\_\_ one another.
2. Heb. 5:12 says when for the time ye should be \_\_\_\_\_

3. Should we follow God's plan even if we don't see why? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Christianity brings out a person's best \_\_\_\_\_ .
5. Men learn to teach by \_\_\_\_\_ .
6. To give properly a giver must see the \_\_\_\_\_ .
7. No organization will do a member's \_\_\_\_\_ for him.
8. Stones tied together are not \_\_\_\_\_
9. One apostate church will not lead another into \_\_\_\_\_ .
10. Can we see good reasons for autonomous churches? \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 12

### HOW DOES THE CHURCH COMPARE WITH CIVIL GOVERNMENTS?

#### OUTLINE

1. *What are the types of civil government?*
2. *What are the branches of civil government?*
3. *How is Christ's kingdom a total monarchy?*



## DISCUSSION

1. *What are the types of civil government?* It is good at this point to study the types of governments in nations so as to compare them with the government of the church. There are three major types of civil governments: (a) anarchy, (b) democracy, and (c) monarchy. *Anarchy* means "no rule." It is a condition of disorder where no one is ruling. There is no government and no one with authority. In a condition of anarchy there will be much crime and mob violence. There is no police force or no authority to enforce law and order. Surely the church is not this kind of condition. The Bible condemns those who "despise government" (II Pet. 2:9, 10). Christianity is based upon the authority of Christ and His Word. Surely the church is not an anarchy. *Democracy* is rule by the people. It is a government selected and approved by those who are governed. In a democracy there are free and open elections so that every citizen has the opportunity to rule or to choose who will rule. But the church is not a democracy. The head of the church, Christ, is not subject to change. No human in the church is capable or worthy of replacing Him. The members of the church do not have the

right to choose another king. Democracy is a good type of rule for earthly governments, but not for the church. The body of Christ is a *monarchy*. A *monarchy* is rule by a king. It is a government by one person who has total power. A true monarch has all authority in his kingdom. No one is allowed to question his right or method of ruling. This helps us to see the government of Christ's kingdom, the church, in its proper light. Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). He is our King and ruler (John 18:37). We are subjects in His kingdom or church (Matt. 16:18, 19). The church is a monarchy with Christ as absolute king. He has total power and authority.

2. *What are the branches of civil government?* The branches or parts of civil government are: (a) legislative, (b) judicial, and (c) executive. The *legislative* branch makes the laws for a nation. Usually this branch is the House of Assembly. The legislative body of a nation is the law-making body. It writes the nation's laws. The *judicial* branch examines or interprets the nation's laws. The judicial branch is made up of the courts of the land which judge the people of the nation by its laws. The *executive* branch of government enforces a nation's laws. It is represented by an executive such as a premier or a

prime minister. This man is head of the armed forces and police. He enforces or carries out the laws of the country. The executive branch is the enforcement branch of any government. The legislative branch makes the laws, the judicial branch interprets the laws, and the executive branch enforces the laws of any civil government.

3. *How is Christ's kingdom a total monarchy?* Christ's kingdom or church is a complete monarchy for three reasons: (a) He made the laws, (b) He revealed and interpreted the laws, and (c) He enforces the laws. Jesus occupies all positions in the branches of government in the church. He is called the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords (I Tim. 6:15). He is the prince of the kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5). No body of church officials wrote His laws. The Holy Spirit revealed or interpreted His laws through the writings of the apostles (John 16:13). The teachings of Christ will judge mankind in the last day (John 12:48). We shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ (II Cor. 5:10). Jesus is our King, Lord, Master, and Ruler. His church is a kingdom into which Christians have been delivered (Col. 1:13). Let all who enter this kingdom recognize the type of kingdom which they are in. No one comes into the church to become a ruler. No one

enters the church to make its laws. All who are added by the Lord to the church are humble servants and subjects to King Jesus.

### Questions

1. What word means "no rule?" \_\_\_\_\_
2. What word means "self-rule?" \_\_\_\_\_
3. What word means "king-rule?" \_\_\_\_\_
4. What branch of government enforces laws?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What branch of government interprets laws? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What branch of government makes laws?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. I Tim. 6:15 calls Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_
8. In John 12:48 Jesus said \_\_\_\_\_ shall judge in the last day.
9. Col. 1:13 says we are delivered into the \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Is the kingdom of Christ a democracy?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 13

### WHY DO MEN FOLLOW LEADERS?

#### OUTLINE

1. *Fear of power (force).*
2. *Desire for reward (employment or bribery).*
3. *Example-following (imitation).*

#### DISCUSSION

1. *Fear of power (force).* In any type of government there are always reasons why men follow their leaders. One such reason is the fear of power. When a leader is a very powerful one such as a king, his followers may be forced to obey him. Such followers greatly fear the leader and are afraid not to follow. Christianity does not use force to cause its members to follow their leaders. God has never forced man to obey Him. Even though Jesus has all authority and power, He does not compel obedience. His followers follow Him because of choice. This is also true of the leaders in the church. They have no power to force followers to obey. No

matter how much earthly power a man may have, he cannot force people in the church to follow him. No church leader must ever try to lead because other members fear him. Christians must fear the devil, but they need have no fear of men. Jesus said not to fear him who kills the body (Matt. 10:28). Government rulers may rule by force, but not rulers in the kingdom of Christ. The Bible says there is no fear in love, for perfect love casteth out fear (I John 4:18). Let no man think he can be a leader in the church because of force or because others may fear his power.

2. *Desire for reward (employment or bribery).* A second motive which leads men to follow leaders is the desire for a reward. This is the reason a man follows the instructions of his employer. He seeks the wages which he will pay. This is the reason also that men can be bribed to obey a person's commands. They wish to receive the payment of the bribe. Honest employment is honorable. There is no wrong in the payment of wages in business. But this is not the reason for following leaders in religion. Some insincere followers may seek to follow a preacher in hopes of some free Bible or some other gift. Men may try to become religious

leaders in order to gain money. But this motive is not a good motive in Christianity. Elders are commanded to oversee the flock "not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind" (I Pet. 5:2). Sometimes a wealthy member will think that he can rule the church because of his money. He may think that his wishes are to be respected because he may give a large contribution. This is not the principle which causes respect in the church. The love of money must be kept out of the church. It is the root of all kinds of evil (I Tim. 6:10). It corrupts leaders and corrupts followers. It enables unqualified men to buy for themselves positions of leadership. Let no man lead or follow in the church because of money.

3. *Example-following (imitation).* The true principle of leadership in the church is example-following. Men follow their leaders in Christianity because they want to imitate them or be like them. This is a greater and nobler motive than any other. This type of leadership produces the best type of leaders. It makes a man's leadership depend upon his character. Furthermore, example-setting provides the strongest motive to followers. It is easy for men to follow a good example. Example-ship is the most important principle in church government. This

principle underlies all teaching in the Bible on leadership. It is the key to understanding Christian leadership. Jesus was the greatest example which the world has ever known. The Bible says that He began both to do and to teach (Acts 1:1). We are not forced to obey His teaching. He does not promise earthly rewards to His followers. But Jesus is the greatest leader of all ages. More men have been completely dedicated to Him than to any other leader. It is because He makes men want to be like Him. He shows us the power of an example. The imitation of an example is the highest and best reason for men to follow leaders.

### Questions

1. Does Christ force men to obey Him? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Matt. 10:28 says fear only him who can cast into \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. I John 4:18 says \_\_\_\_\_ love casteth out \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. I Pet. 5:2 calls money \_\_\_\_\_ .
5. I Tim. 6:10 says the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ is the root of all \_\_\_\_\_ .
6. What word means trying to be like a leader? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Acts 1:1 says Jesus began both to \_\_\_\_\_ and to \_\_\_\_\_ .



8. Who is the world's greatest leader? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Is honest employment honorable outside of church leadership? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What is the highest reason for following leaders? \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 14

### WHY IS EXAMPLESHIP IMPORTANT IN THE CHURCH?

#### OUTLINE

1. *Because of the meaning of an example.*
2. *Because of the need for examples.*
3. *Because of the power of examples.*

#### DISCUSSION

1. *Because of the meaning of an example.* An example is a picture or demonstration. It shows rather than tells. It is a pattern which is set forth so that others may clearly see and follow. The Bible says that Christ left us an example that we should follow His steps (I Pet. 2:21). Jesus has walked the road of life ahead of us to show us the way to travel. The way we

should go is easy to understand because He has given us a clear pattern. This is what an example is. The word "sample" and the word "ensample" (meaning example) are very similar. All should know what a sample is. When a trader is selling in the market, he will show forth samples of his goods. He will want to show very good samples so as to cause buyers to desire his goods. He does not force buyers to buy, but he attracts them to buy with his samples or examples. The same is true of an example of the Christian life. It must be an attractive sample which will win others to Christ. An example may be good or bad. The Bible says that the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are set forth as examples to us (Jude 7). They are bad examples. They are examples of God's vengeance upon wickedness. The unfaithful Israelites in the wilderness are examples to us today (I Cor. 10:6, 11). Examples, then, are pictures, samples, or demonstrations of what God wants us to do or not to do. Every Christian is a good example or bad. He is constantly showing to others a good demonstration or a bad one. Good examples are very important in the church because they are very easily understood and followed.

2. *Because of the need for examples.*  
Good examples are also important in the church

because they are so badly needed. God sent His only Son because the world needed so very badly a perfect example. God had dealt with men for many centuries, but only after Christ came could men know and understand God clearly. The world has seen many great teachers and leaders, but none except Jesus could perfectly demonstrate His instructions. The world has always yearned to see lessons as well as to hear them. The need is still great today. Men long to see the teachings of Jesus performed in the lives of His followers. The world is over-crowded with teachers with every kind of teaching. But a teacher who lives according to his lessons is rare. The preacher Timothy was told to take heed to himself and to his teaching so as to save himself and those who heard him (I Tim. 4:16). There are many men in the church who want to be leaders. But there are only a few who want to be examples. The need is great inside the church and outside. I Tim. 4:12 said Timothy should be an example "of" the believers. This verse in the Revised Version says he should be an example "to" the believers. There is a need for leaders to be example "to" the church itself and "of" the church to outsiders. The world needs good examples, and the church needs good examples to follow. Examples are important because the need for them is so great.

3. *Because of the power of examples.* Proper examples are seriously needed because of their power. Paul said his speech and his preaching were not in enticing words of men's wisdom, but were in "demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (I Cor. 2:4). Paul's influence was great because he was a great example. Men can preach powerful sermons without speaking one word. The Bible records nothing that Abel said. But being dead, he yet speaketh by his example (Heb. 11:4). Enoch, Abraham, and Joshua were not great spokesmen. But they were men of action. Consider the power of their examples. The Lord's church has too many spokesmen today who say and do not. This type of leadership is weak. But the powerful leader is the man who wins respect. He is imitated because of his good character. He has great influence and power for good. His life is powerful inside the church and out. Consider how the life of Jesus has changed the world! For over nineteen centuries millions of devoted followers have tried to be like Him. He has altered the course of the world more than all other forces combined. Great and powerful armies and empires have fallen and been forgotten, but the influence of Christ only grows. Nothing has the power which the life of Jesus has to change a sinful world. Examples are greatly important in the church because of their power.

## Questions

1. I Pet. 2:21 says Jesus left us an \_\_\_\_\_
2. What two types of examples are there?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. I Tim. 4:16 says take heed to \_\_\_\_\_  
and to the doctrine.
4. Does an example have more power than money? \_\_\_\_\_
5. I Cor. 2:4 says Paul's preaching was in \_\_\_\_\_  
of the Spirit and power.
6. Heb. 11:4 says Abel being dead yet \_\_\_\_\_
7. Who is the world's greatest example?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Give two other words which mean the same  
as example \_\_\_\_\_
9. Heb. 4:11 speaks of an example of \_\_\_\_\_
10. Were the Israelites in the wilderness ex-  
amples to us? \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 15

### WHO IN THE CHURCH ARE EXAMPLES?

#### OUTLINE

1. *Christ*
2. *Elders and deacons*

3. *Evangelists*
4. *Parents*
5. *Congregations*
6. *Every member*

## DISCUSSION

1. *Christ.* The Bible shows the importance of exampleship by showing how each officer and each member is to be an example. Christians do not influence the world or one another by force or bribe. Their influence is from their example. Jesus has first done Himself all things that Christians are required to do. He began both to do and to teach (Acts 1:1). He left us an example that we should follow His steps (I Pet. 2:21). He is our great High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He was in all points tempted as we are and was yet without sin (Heb. 4:15). Jesus is the chief Shepherd who leads His sheep rather than driving them (I Pet. 5:4). The shepherds of Jesus' day lived closely with their sheep. They knew each animal individually. The shepherd loved his sheep, and the sheep loved their shepherd and loved to follow him. The shepherd always went ahead of the flock. He showed them the path to follow. He never beat them nor

forced them. He tenderly led them in such a way that the sheep wanted to follow him. This is the type of Shepherd that Christ is. This is the type of leaders which Christians must be.

2. *Elders and deacons.* As overseers and servants of the congregations, elders and deacons must be examples to the flock. Elders from Ephesus were told to take heed first to themselves. Then they were to take heed to the flock (Acts 20:28). I Pet. 5:3 says, "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." The qualifications of elders are ways in which they must be examples to other members and to the world. The first deacons were selected because they were men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit, and wisdom (Acts 6:3). Deacons must first be proved and found blameless or without reproach (I Tim. 3:10). Elders and deacons are actually selected because they qualify as good examples. The church is willing to follow them because their lives are good examples. They should not be selected or followed for any other reason. The government of the Lord's church is based upon example-ship. When elders or deacons rebuke another member, their own lives must be good examples. The Bible says that an elder cannot take care of the family of God if he first does

not rule well his own family (I Tim. 3:4, 5). He must also be of good report from those outside the church (I Tim. 3:7). Elders and deacons must be good examples.

3. *Evangelists.* Another important example for the congregation is the preacher. Evangelists are commanded, "Be thou an example" (I Tim. 4:12). They are to be examples in word, in manner of life, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Paul told Timothy to take heed unto himself and unto the doctrine or teaching (I Tim. 4:16). By setting a proper example, as well as by teaching, he would both save himself and those who heard him. But without a good life or without good teaching, he would not save himself and his hearers. Paul said to Thessalonian Christians, "For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you" (II Thess. 3:7). Paul explained that his actions were to make himself an example to the people (vs. 9). Evangelists imitate Christ so as to become good examples before the church.

4. *Parents.* Christian fathers and mothers must be good and strong examples to their children. Young Timothy had a faithful mother and grandmother before him (II Tim. 1:5). No



example is stronger on a child than that of his parents. A child knows truly what his parents do in the home. He cannot be deceived. This enables many women, who may not be able to read or teach the Bible, to teach by good example. Parents are important patterns or examples in the church.

5. *Congregations.* The demonstration which the whole congregation shows to others is either good or bad. The church at Thessalonica was commended for being a strong example to all that believed in their area (I Thess. 1:7). Other weaker churches can be encouraged by the good example of a strong church. Denominations and heathens are watching the example of every congregation. Jesus said that His people are to be like a city set on a hill which cannot be hid (Matt. 5:14). He said each Christian is to be a light, and when grouped together, they are like a brightly lit city able to be seen for a great distance. Congregations are to be good examples.

6. *Every member.* A congregation cannot be a bright light unless every member shines brightly. Jesus said to individuals, "Let your light so shine before men" (Matt. 5:16). Every Christian's life is a book which is known and read of all men (II Cor. 3:3). Every member of the Lord's church must be a good example of

a truly Christ-like person.

### Questions

1. Heb. 4:15 says Christ is our great \_\_\_\_\_
2. I Pet. 5:4 calls Christ the \_\_\_\_\_
3. Acts 20:28 shows elders to take heed first to \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. I Pet. 5:3 requires elders to be \_\_\_\_\_ to the flock.
5. Give one verse reference to show that deacons must be examples \_\_\_\_\_
6. I Tim. 3:7 says elders must have a good report from them \_\_\_\_\_
7. I Tim. 4:12 tells evangelists, "Be thou an \_\_\_\_\_ ."
8. I Tim. 4:16 tells evangelists to take heed to what two things? \_\_\_\_\_
9. II Tim. 1:5 gives the names of Timothy's mother as \_\_\_\_\_ and grandmother as \_\_\_\_\_ .
10. Give two verse references showing congregations must be examples \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 16

### WHAT ARE THE WORK POSITIONS IN THE CHURCH?

#### OUTLINE

1. *Elders*
2. *Deacons*
3. *Evangelists*

#### DISCUSSION

1. *Elders.* We are now ready to study the areas of work to be done by the leaders of the church. Please understand first the meaning of the word “office.” I Tim. 3:1 says, “If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.” This shows that the meaning of an office in the church is a work. An office in the church is an area of responsibility or work. Many people think that officers in the Lord’s church are like some officers in the government. They think that they have a desk and office and only tell others what to do. But an office in the church is a work to be done. Many offices in business

and government have been corrupted in nations. The office-holders have paid bribes so as to have easy money. Their position is to them a way to escape work. They think of their office as a high position with great honors but with little work. The officers in the Lord's church can be likened to the laborers who work with palm oil. One man has the duty of climbing the trees and cutting out the fruit. A woman may have the work of carrying and gathering the palm fruit. Then another man may be responsible for mashing and cooking the oil. All must work zealously in their appointed places. In this way, elders have a work to do, deacons have a work to do, and evangelists have their own responsibility. Each man has an area of work to fill. Each has a particular duty to perform. This is the meaning of his office. It is his work or type of labor. Elders in the church have the responsibility of oversight (I Pet. 5:2). They are overseers (Acts 20:28). They watch in behalf of the souls of the members (Heb. 13:17). They are the spiritual shepherds of the flock (Acts 20:28).

2. *Deacons.* Deacons are servants in the church. The word "deacon" means "one who serves." Although all Christians are humble servants, the deacons are especially well qualified to

serve the needs of the church. In the Jerusalem church men were needed to serve tables or to oversee the feeding of the needy members. This work was given over to the first deacons (Acts 6:1-6). The qualifications for deacons show that they must be men of character and zeal. They are men who have respect in the church because of their life and labor (I Tim. 3:8-13). They have their area of work in the church, just as the elders have theirs. This is the meaning of the "office of a deacon" (I Tim. 3:13). Elders and deacons are the only ones according to the Bible who have an office. The many other offices and officers found in denominational churches are unheard of in the Scriptures. In Phil. 1:1, Paul writes to the church at Philippi with its bishops (or elders) and deacons. Elders and deacons are the officers in the Lord's church.

3. *Evangelists.* An evangelist is not an officer in the church, but he has a particular work to do. Paul told Timothy to do the work of an evangelist (II Tim. 4:5). An evangelist is a preacher. His special area of work is in preaching and teaching. Even though the church at Philippi had elders and deacons (vs. 1), Timothy was sent to them by Paul to do the work that an evangelist needed to do (Phil. 2:19). Evangelists are in subjection to the oversight of the elders, just as all

other members are. A preacher working under elders should have great respect for the elders (I Tim. 5:17). But a preacher's authority is not the elders' word, but the Word of God. The Bible shows that a disorderly elder is even to be rebuked when necessary that others may fear (I Tim. 5:19, 20). God has a place for evangelists and a place for elders and deacons in the church. Each should be well qualified and prepared for his work. Each must know his area of responsibility so as to do the work which God intends for him to do. Likewise, the congregations should understand the work which these men are to do. There must be no officers or offices created other than those of elders and deacons. Let no preacher seek to take over the work of elders in ruling the church. But let each person know and understand God's work positions in the church. Then let each man do that work for which he is properly and best qualified.

### Questions

1. I Tim. 3:1 says a bishop's office is a good \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. What are the two officers in the church? (Phil. 1:1) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
3. Heb. 13:17 says elders watch in behalf of \_\_\_\_\_ .

4. The word “deacon” means a \_\_\_\_\_
5. II Tim. 4:5 says Timothy was to do the \_\_\_\_\_ of an \_\_\_\_\_
6. Who are the overseers of the church? (I Pet. 5:1, 2) \_\_\_\_\_
7. Officers in the church are like palm workers. Each has his own \_\_\_\_\_
8. I Tim. 3:13 speaks of the \_\_\_\_\_ of a deacon.
9. What chapter tells of the selection of the first deacons? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Is an evangelist under the oversight of elders? \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 17

### WHAT ARE THE NAMES FOR ELDERS?

#### OUTLINE

1. *Elders*
2. *Presbyters*
3. *Bishops*
4. *Overseers*
5. *Pastors*
6. *Shepherds*

## DISCUSSION

1. *Elders.* Elders in the Lord's church have six names. Each has an important meaning. By studying the meaning of each name, much can be learned about these officers. The most common name is "elders." The word "elder" means "an older person." This refers to a person older in faith as well as older in years. Elders are the most mature and experienced Christians in the church. They cannot be novices (I Tim. 3:6). Just because a man is an elder in his village does not mean that he will qualify as an elder in the church. He might even be the oldest member of the church and still not be qualified as a spiritual elder. He could even be the first member of a congregation without being a Scriptural elder. The Bible says that Paul called the elders of the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:17). In several cities elders were appointed in every church (Acts 14:23). Titus was left in Crete to ordain elders in every city (Titus 1:5). The name "elders" shows that these men are older and more mature in the faith. They have the respect which years of faithfulness bring.

2. *Presbyters.* Another name meaning exactly the same as elders is "presbyters." This is just another word meaning "older." It is found



in the Bible only one time (I Tim. 4:14). It has the same significance as the word “elders” and should be understood clearly from the above definition.

3. *Bishops.* Another name for elders is “bishops” meaning “overseers.” It is found in I Tim. 3:1, 2; Titus 1:7; Phil. 1:1. It is elsewhere used to refer to Jesus as the overseer of our souls (I Pet. 2:25), and to the place of oversight from which Judas Iscariot fell (Acts 1:20). This name for elders shows the work of overseeing which elders must do. I Pet. 5:2 says that they are to have the oversight. This emphasizes that elders themselves do not necessarily do all the work of teaching and leading. But they do oversee all such work. They must superintend or administer the work of the local church. As all organizations must have overseers, the Lord’s church has bishops or overseers.

4. *Overseers.* As seen above, this word means exactly the same as bishops. It is made of two words: “see” and “over.” An overseer looks out over the church. He is a watchman over the welfare and business of the congregation. Acts 20:28 says that the Holy Ghost had made the Ephesian elders overseers of the flock. They were to take heed to themselves “and to all the flock.”

It was their responsibility to keep out false teachers which would come (vss. 29, 30). The name "overseers" tells of the important work of oversight which is so necessary in the Lord's church.

5. *Pastors.* This name for elders is found only once in the New Testament (Eph. 4:11). It is another word meaning shepherds. Spiritual leaders over the people of Israel were called "pastors" (Jer. 2:8). Woes and curses were pronounced upon those pastors who destroyed and scattered the Lord's sheep (Jer. 23:1-7). The word "pastor" is similar to the word "pasture." This further shows the meaning of a shepherd and sheep. Denominational pastors differ from Scriptural pastors. Pastors were elders in the Bible, and were always more than one in each church.

6. *Shepherds.* In writing to elders the apostle Peter tells them to feed the flock among them. He then says that when the chief Shepherd shall appear (Christ), they would receive a fadeless crown (I Pet. 5:1-4). This shows that elders are shepherds in the congregation under Christ the chief Shepherd. This comparison of elders to shepherds is meaningful. Shepherds in Bible lands were very interested in their sheep. They loved them and nurtured them (see Psa. 23). They always led ahead of them, never driving them

from behind. They knew each problem of each animal and loved them every one. They protected them, fed them, and watered them. Shepherds would suffer great hardships to find a lost sheep or to keep their flocks from harm. This is the kind of officers the Lord wants as elders. The name "shepherd" and all other names for elders in the church help to give us a good understanding of these men. Elders are presbyters, bishops, overseers, pastors, or shepherds.

### Questions

1. How many names do elders have? \_\_\_\_\_
2. The word "elder" means \_\_\_\_\_
3. Acts 20:17 says Paul called the \_\_\_\_\_ from Ephesus.
4. Acts 14:23 says \_\_\_\_\_ were ordained in every \_\_\_\_\_ .
5. I Tim. 4:14 calls elders the \_\_\_\_\_
6. I Tim. 3:1 says to desire the \_\_\_\_\_ of a \_\_\_\_\_
7. Do the names "bishop" and "overseer" mean exactly the same? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What two words make the name "overseer?" \_\_\_\_\_
9. Eph. 4:11 calls elders \_\_\_\_\_
10. How many pastors must there be in a church? \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 18

### HOW ARE ELDERS OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD?

#### OUTLINE

1. *The six names all refer to the same man.*
2. *Always more than one elder in each church.*
3. *All elders in a church have equal authority.*

#### DISCUSSION

1. *The six names all refer to the same man.* Many misunderstandings have caused confusion on the subject of elders. One misunderstanding is overcome when it is understood that the six names for elders all refer to the same men. In denominational churches there are elders who are different from pastors. Then bishops are different officers also. But the six names studied in Lesson 17 are really three groups of two names each. "Elders" and "presbyters" are two words

meaning "older ones." "Overseers" and "bishops" are two words meaning "superintendents." And "shepherds" and "pastors" both mean "those who tend sheep." Now notice how these three sets of words are all joined together to speak of the same men. In Acts 20:17 the officers from Ephesus are called "elders." But verse 28 calls these men "overseers" and says that they are over the "flock," which makes them shepherds or pastors. Therefore, the elders (presbyters) were also called overseers (bishops) and shepherds (pastors). These are not different offices but only different terms for the same office. Another passage which shows that the six names for elders all refer to the same men is I Pet. 5. Verse 1 speaks to "elders." Verse 2 says that these elders should "feed the flock of God," which makes them shepherds. And verse 2 also tells them to take the "oversight" of the flock, which makes them overseers. Elders, presbyters, overseers, bishops, shepherds, and pastors are not different officers. These are merely six names for the same officers in the government of the Lord's church.

2. *Always more than one elder in each church.* Another mistake often made in denominational churches is that of having one "pastor" or "bishop" over a church. In New Testament

congregations there were always more than one pastor (or elder) in each church. Never do we read in the Bible of "the pastor" of a church. Instead, the Bible says that "elders" were ordained in every church (Acts 14:23). "Elders" (not "an elder") were ordained in every city (Titus 1:5). Paul called the "elders" or "overseers" from Ephesus (Acts 20:17, 28). He wrote to the "bishops" at Philippi (Phil. 1:1). This is Christ's plan for the government of the church. There is great wisdom in the plan. If a single man ruled each congregation he might easily think of himself as "the chief" of the church. He would be tempted to seek prominence for himself. He would not have to consider others in his judgments. He would be sole rule. Christ's plan does not allow a leader to make himself "the big man." The Bible plan is for a group of elders to rule each congregation. Unless there can be found at least two qualified men in a church, that church must wait to have elders. It would be unscriptural in organization to have only one. If one of the two elders in a congregation dies or is disqualified, the remaining elder must resign as an elder until another man becomes qualified. There must always be more than one elder in each church.

3. *All elders in a church have equal authority.* A third mistake often made is for one

elder to consider himself above the others. This was one of the first departures in early church government. It later led to the Roman Catholic idea of “bishops” over several churches. I Pet. 5:4 speaks of Christ as “the chief Shepherd.” The Bible calls no ordinary elder “the chief elder.” Since Christ is called “the” chief Shepherd, we are led to believe that He is the only chief Shepherd. I Pet. 2:25 calls Christ “the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” Never do we read of any man as “the bishop” of a church or of a group of churches. Each congregation has “overseers,” not “an overseer” or “a pastor.” Furthermore, elders who may have served many years do not have greater power than one who has not. Elders in a large congregation do not have greater power authority than those in a smaller one. The apostle Peter called himself a fellow elder in speaking to other elders (I Pet. 5:1). Elders are warned against being lifted up with pride and falling into the condemnation of the devil (I Tim. 3:6). The devil rejoices in making an elder proud. Human pride easily corrupts any leader. All elders in a church have equal authority. None has greater power than any other.

### Questions

1. How many offices are referred to by the six names? \_\_\_\_\_

2. The six names are really \_\_\_\_\_ groups of \_\_\_\_\_ names each.
3. Name two Bible chapters that join the names together \_\_\_\_\_
4. Acts 14:23 says \_\_\_\_\_ were ordained in every \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Titus 1:5 says \_\_\_\_\_ were ordained in every \_\_\_\_\_.
6. In Phil. 1:1 Paul wrote to the \_\_\_\_\_ at Philippi.
7. Can one man ever serve alone as an elder?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. I Pet. 2:25 calls Christ the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of your souls.
9. Does the Bible ever speak of “the bishop” of a church? \_\_\_\_\_
10. I Tim. 3:6 warns against being lifted up with \_\_\_\_\_.

## LESSON 19

### HOW DENOMINATIONS CORRUPT CHURCH GOVERNMENT

#### OUTLINE

1. *Following human authority instead of Bible authority.*



2. *“Going beyond” the independent local church.*
3. *Using unscriptural officers and offices.*
4. *Changing scriptural offices.*

## DISCUSSION

1. *Following human authority instead of Bible authority.* In this lesson and in the next one we wish to study how church government is often corrupted. In the present lesson we will examine how denominational churches have corrupted church organization. In the following lesson we will study how church organization is often corrupted by the Lord's church as well. The major reason that all corruptions have come into denominational church government has been their following of human authority instead of Bible authority. Their greatest error is in following their catechisms. Denominational catechisms authorize many changes from the Bible plan of church organization. Since the catechism is followed as having authority, the changes and alterations are thus followed. It is impossible to bring people back to the true plan of church government as long as human catechisms are respected as having authority. The Scriptures must be honored as being the only authority in religion. They thoroughly furnish a Christian unto

all good works (II Tim. 3:17). Their authority on church government, as on every other religious matter, must be respected.

2. *“Going beyond” the independent local church.* Another way that denominations pervert true church government is in failing to respect the autonomy of the local congregation. A major principle in the Lord’s plan for governing His church is the independence of each local church. Most denominational churches do not have self-ruling congregations. Their type of organization is entirely different. But we are warned not to go beyond the doctrine of Christ (II John 9, 10). We must abide in the doctrine of Christ on the subject of church organization, as on every other part of the Lord’s plan for His church. When we abide in the Bible teaching of church government, we will have independent local congregations. When men go beyond this to form districts and synods, they are not abiding in the teachings of Christ. Denominational churches have corrupted the Lord’s plan by going beyond the independent local church.

3. *Using unscriptural officers and offices.* I Pet. 4:11 says that we must speak as the oracles of God speak. This means doing Bible things in Bible ways and calling Bible things by Bible

names. Rev. 22:18, 19 warns against adding to God's Word or taking away from it. For these reasons every part of the Lord's church must follow the Bible exactly. Officers in the church must be the same as the officers in the Bible. But most denominational churches have unscriptural offices and officers. These are offices created by men and not found in the Bible. Such are the offices of "catechist," "agent," "archbishop," "pope," and many others. This is not speaking as the Bible speaks. It is adding to the Word of God. The Lord's church cannot be restored today unless all offices and officers which are not found in the New Testament are omitted.

4. *Changing scriptural offices.* A fourth way that denominations corrupt true church government is in changing the offices that are found in the Bible. That is, the Bible name of the office is used, but the Bible meaning is not followed. This is true of denominational bishops. Although bishops are found in the Bible, the denominational bishops are not like New Testament bishops. The same is true of the denominational pastor. In the Bible pastors were the elders over a congregation. In modern churches the pastor is a preacher in charge of one or more churches. The name is the same, but the office is different. Another example is the denominational priest. In the Bible every Christian was a priest (I Pet.

2:5, 9). But in sectarian churches priests are special officers in a congregation. In these cases, then, we see that a scriptural name has been used, but an unscriptural meaning has been given. Denominational churches, therefore, corrupt church government by following human authority, by rejecting the local independent church, by using offices not found in the Bible, and by changing the meaning of offices which are in the scriptures.

### Questions

1. What word names the book of human authority of denominations? \_\_\_\_\_
2. II Tim. 3:17 says the scriptures \_\_\_\_\_ us unto all good works.
3. II John 9 says to \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ.
4. What kind of congregations are found in the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_
5. I Pet. 4:11 says to speak as the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Rev. 22:18, 19 warns not to \_\_\_\_\_ nor \_\_\_\_\_ from God's book.
7. Name 4 offices not found in the Bible.  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Give 3 Bible names which denominations have corrupted \_\_\_\_\_
9. I Pet. 2:9 says we are a \_\_\_\_\_
10. Can the true church be restored if its offices are not restored? \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 20

### HOW CHURCHES OF CHRIST CAN CORRUPT CHURCH GOVERNMENT

#### OUTLINE

1. *Appointing unqualified officers.*
2. *Having ‘acting elders.’*
3. *Changing functions into positions.*
4. *Church committees.*

#### DISCUSSION

1. *Appointing unqualified officers.* Corruptions of church government can occur in the Lord's church as well as in denominations. Some churches of Christ do not follow the Bible plan carefully. For instance, the Bible gives plainly the qualifications of elders and deacons. It says that a man “must” have these qualifications to be an officer (I Tim. 3:2). This word “must” means “it is binding.” This is a strong word showing that the qualifications are absolutely essential. Jesus said, “Ye must be born again” (John 3:7). In order to enter the kingdom of God it is necessary to be born again. There can be no exception.

The same is true of the qualifications for elders. The characteristics "must" be met or the man cannot be qualified. The word "must" applies to every qualification given. If some qualifications are met but others are not, the person is unqualified. It is a violation of Bible teaching to appoint an officer if he does not meet all of the necessary requirements. This will corrupt the government of the Lord's church.

2. *Having "acting elders."* Another mistake often made among churches of Christ is having "acting elders." There are men who do not have the qualifications to be elders, but they want to be called elders. They are not qualified elders, but they want to act as elders. This is a violation of God's Word. The plan of Christ for elders over each church is based upon example-ship. If a man is not an example in all the qualifications given, he cannot act as if he were. Suppose a man were not a Christian, but he wanted to be an "acting Christian." Should the church allow him to do this although he actually was not a Christian? No one can wear the name "Christian" who is not truly a Christian. Likewise, no one can wear the name "elder" who is not truly an elder. To do so is a violation of the scriptures. It is a corruption of Christ's plan for the governing of His church.

3. *Changing functions into positions.* A third way that congregations often corrupt Christ's plan is in making a good work to become a position in the church. A function is an activity. An example is the function or activity of keeping account of the Lord's money in a congregation. We call such a man a "treasurer." But a treasurer is not an officer. He is only performing an activity. Keeping account of the Lord's money is a good work. It is not a position in the church. There is no church office called "treasurer" in the Bible. But sometimes treasurers like to change their function into a position. This is contrary to God's Word. A man who uses a long stick to keep members awake during a church service is not an officer. He is performing an activity or doing a needed work. But suppose such a man begins to consider himself in a position in the church. Suppose he begins to wear some title and have some authority. He has changed a function into a position. The same is often true of a song leader. Such a person can do a good work by directing well the singing. But he corrupts a good work by beginning to consider himself an officer in the church. In I Cor. chapter 14, we read of church members who did many things to assist in the worship services. But just because a man had a part in leading the worship did not mean he was an

officer. He was only performing an activity. His part was a function, not a position. Every Christian has part in the worship and work of the church. But this does not make us all officers. The trouble comes when men think more of the authority which they can gain than they do of the service they can render. Many men are more interested in the prominence which they can gain for themselves than they are of the good work which they can perform. Such a man was Diotrephes who loved to have pre-eminence (III John 9). There are many modern Diotrephes in the church. They are men who seek self-glory. They corrupt the Lord's church by seeking to be "big men." They begin by changing a function into a position in the church. They may have been doing a good work, but they have corrupted it by trying to make out of it a position of authority. These corruptions in the Lord's church are serious just as denominational corruptions are serious. We must not go beyond the teachings of God's Word.

4. *Church committees.* One particular way that members often change functions into positions is in committees. The word "committee" means a group of persons "committed" to a certain work. Men who are asked by the



church to do some work may soon consider themselves in a position of authority. Especially is this true of the chairman of a committee. Such a man is tempted to want prominence. He may soon call himself a permanent committee chairman. He may try to have a position in the congregation. Several men may be selected to repair the roof of the church building. This is good until these men consider themselves as officers and as having authority over others. The church may ask several men to try to find a preacher for the church. Because they love prominence they call themselves the “preacher committee,” and assume a position of power in the church. This danger is especially great if a man calls himself “the committee head.” This man tries to rule the group and set himself up as a permanent officer. Committees are dangerous and should be avoided whenever they allow men to have authority and prominence (III John 9). They often become permanent and their head becomes an officer. They love to assume authority instead of humbly doing a needy work. They make a good activity into a position of authority. Church committees often corrupt the simple, scriptural rule of the Lord’s church.

### Questions

1. What does the word “must” mean in I Tim. 3:2? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Does “must” apply to every qualification?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Do we read of “acting elders” in the Bible?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Should a man call himself an “acting Christian” if he is not a Christian? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is a function? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Is a church treasurer an officer? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What did Diotrephes love? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Were members in I Cor. 14 in positions of authority? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Is a committee chairman an officer? \_\_\_\_\_
10. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a group \_\_\_\_\_  
to some work.

## LESSON 21

### WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF CONGREGATIONS AS TO THEIR PROGRESS IN ORGANIZING?

#### OUTLINE

1. *Scripturally unorganized.*
2. *Unscripturally unorganized.*
3. *Unscripturally organized.*
4. *Scripturally organized.*

## DISCUSSION

1. *Scripturally unorganized.* All congregations should be working toward being fully organized with qualified elders and deacons. But this may take many years. In this lesson we wish to study the types of congregations according to their progress in organizing. In this lesson we will be using four terms: "Scriptural" and "unscriptural," "organized" and "unorganized." The meaning of "Scriptural" is that the congregation's condition of government is right according to the Bible. "Unscriptural" means that the condition is wrong or sinful. The term "organized" means that a church has elders and deacons. An "unorganized" church has no elders or deacons. A church may be scripturally unorganized. This is a congregation with no qualified officers, and consequently none has been appointed. The church is scriptural because it is right to have no officers if none is qualified. It is Christ's plan that each congregation have no officers in its beginning and early history. This is to allow time for Christian men to grow strong in the Lord. During this period the church studies and learns the Bible principles of church government. Such a church is said to be "unorganized" because it has no qualified officers. It is not fully organized as it will be later when it has qualified

officers. It is not a bad condition for a church to have no officers if it has not had time. In the Bible we read of some congregations with officers and others with none. It is far better to have no officers than to have unqualified ones. A scripturally unorganized church, then, is one with no men yet qualified and no officers yet appointed.

2. *Unscripturally unorganized.* This is a congregation which is unorganized by not having officers, but it is unscriptural or wrong in this condition. The reason that it is wrong is that there are qualified men who should have been appointed but who have not. Such a church has had many years in order to enable men to become qualified. There are men qualified, but the church has not appointed them. This is what is unscriptural. Just as soon as men are truly qualified, they should be appointed. A church cannot function as well without officers as it can by having qualified elders and deacons. It is Christ's plan that every church be working toward complete organization with its elders and deacons. An unscripturally unorganized church is one with qualified men which have not yet been appointed as officers.

3. *Unscripturally organized.* This type congregation has officers appointed and is therefore organized, but the men are unqualified. It is

in this way unscriptural. Some churches are in a rush to organize. They appoint officers before they are qualified. In this they bring upon themselves much corruption and trouble. It is scriptural to not have officers if none is qualified. But it is unscriptural to appoint elders unless the men are truly qualified. Such a condition is much worse than having no officers at all. It will bring great trouble and corruption upon the congregation. An unscripturally organized church is one with unqualified men appointed as officers.

4. *Scripturally organized.* A scripturally organized church is one with qualified men appointed as elders and deacons. The church has refused to appoint men until they were qualified. Such a church is organized because it has elders and deacons. It is scriptural because these officers are properly qualified. May every church be studying and working toward the time of scripturally qualified officers. But let none rush into appointing men before they are truly qualified. In I Tim. chapter 3 and Titus chapter 1 are given the qualifications for elders and deacons. These chapters require much study. In the following lesson we will begin a study of the characteristics of an elder point by point. Churches are either scripturally unorganized, unscripturally unorganized, unscripturally organized, or scripturally organized according to their progress in appointing officers.

## Questions

1. To show that a church's condition is right we say it is \_\_\_\_\_
2. To show that a church has officers we say it is \_\_\_\_\_
3. To show that a church's condition is wrong we say it is \_\_\_\_\_
4. To show that a church has no officers we say it is \_\_\_\_\_
5. In the Bible do we read of organized and unorganized churches? \_\_\_\_\_
6. A church with no qualified men and none appointed is \_\_\_\_\_
7. A church with qualified men but none appointed is \_\_\_\_\_
8. A church with unqualified men appointed is \_\_\_\_\_
9. A church with qualified men appointed is \_\_\_\_\_
10. What two chapters give qualifications for officers? \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 22

### QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS (I)

#### OUTLINE

1. *Blameless*
2. *The husband of one wife*
3. *Vigilant*
4. *Sober*
5. *Of good behavior*

#### DISCUSSION

Before beginning the study of the qualifications of elders point by point, a few matters of introduction are in order. I Tim. 3:1 says, "if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." Every man who desires to be an officer in the Lord's church should have such a desire because it is a good work. He should not desire the office because it has prominence or authority, but because it is a way of working for the Lord. He must want to be an elder in order to enter into hard work, not to escape work, or to tell others how to work. The work of an elder is demanding work, taking many hours and great

effort. It must not be sought because of a desire for prominence or power. I Tim. 3:2 says, "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach." The word "must" means "it is binding, it is required, it is necessary," or "it is essential." Jesus said that whatsoever the apostles bound on earth would be binding in heaven (Matt. 16:19). The qualifications of elders are certainly bound in heaven and on earth. Each point "must" be required. It is impossible for a man to qualify as a scriptural elder without every qualification.

1. *Blameless.* "Blameless" means "without reproach." One who is blameless cannot be accused. This does not mean sinless perfection, for all humans sin (I John 1:8). Instead, it means that one is trying his best to overcome his sins. He is quick to repent, confess, and pray when he learns of his mistakes. In this way he cannot be blamed or accused in character. Zacharias and Elizabeth were blameless keepers of the Law (Luke 1:6). Widows who are to be supported by the church must be blameless (I Tim. 5:7). Saul was blameless concerning the righteousness of the law of Moses (Phil. 3:6). All Christians are commanded to be blameless in preparation for the return of Christ (I Thess. 5:23; II Pet. 3:14). From these verses we see that it is possible



to be blameless. Elders must be above reproach or beyond accusation in character.

2. *The husband of one wife.* This requirement means two things; that a man must be married, and that he must have only one wife. Neither a bachelor nor a polygamist can be an elder. In this matter, as in all others, he is an example to the whole congregation (I Pet. 5:3). Every man must have his own wife, and every woman must have her own husband (I Cor. 7:2). If a husband or wife should marry another person while the first partner lives, it is adultery (Rom. 7:1-3). Jesus said that this was God's plan from the beginning, although He allowed changes under Moses because of the hardness of men's hearts (Matt. 19:3-9). An elder must be the husband of one wife.

3. *Vigilant.* To be vigilant is to be watchful. A night-watchman is vigilant. He is awake to all possible dangers. Watchmen on the walls of the cities of Israel were required to warn of coming danger or be guilty of the blood of the people if they did not warn them (Ezek. 3:17-19). Heb. 13:17 says that elders watch in behalf of the souls of the members as those who shall give an account. All Christians must be sober and watchful, for the devil as a roaring lion

walks about seeking whom he may devour (I Pet. 5:8). Elders must feel their responsibility to watch over the flock.

4. *Sober.* To be sober is to be sober-minded, sensible, and serious. Christians must live soberly in an evil world (Titus 2:12). The Gospel contains words of truth and soberness (Acts 26:25). We must not sleep but be watchful and sober (I Thess. 5:6). Our mind must be clothed with soberness (I Pet. 1:13). We must consider the seriousness of the Christian life (I Pet. 4:7; 5:8). An elder must not be unconcerned about the sober facts of life. He must be serious-minded, thoughtful, and sensible in character.

5. *Of good behavior.* To qualify as an elder a man's life must be well-disciplined and orderly. The apostle Paul set a good example of proper behavior before other Christians (I Thess. 2:10; II Thess. 3:7). Our manner of life must be honest and good before unbelievers so as to win them to Christ (I Pet. 2:12). An elder's life is upright and true as an example to all who know him.

### Questions

1. What word means "it is binding?" \_\_\_\_\_

2. I Tim. 3:1 says a man should desire a good \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. Matt. 16:19 says the apostles' teachings were to be \_\_\_\_\_ in heaven and earth.
4. Blameless means \_\_\_\_\_ .
5. Does blameless mean sinless perfection? \_\_\_\_\_
6. "Husband of one wife" keeps one out who is a \_\_\_\_\_ or a \_\_\_\_\_ .
7. To be vigilant is to be \_\_\_\_\_
8. Give 3 words for "sober" \_\_\_\_\_
9. Give 2 words for "good behavior" \_\_\_\_\_
10. What man is described in Ezek. 3:17-19? \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 23

### QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS (II)

#### OUTLINE

1. *Given to hospitality.*
2. *Apt to teach.*
3. *Not given to wine.*
4. *No striker.*
5. *Not greedy of filthy lucre (not covetous).*
6. *Patient.*

## DISCUSSION

1. *Given to hospitality.* The subject of the qualifications of elders needs much study. Each point should be clearly understood. These characteristics are actually the traits which every Christian should possess. Only a few which pertain to a married person are different from the characteristics of every mature Christian. Most of the qualifications every Christian must strive to possess. One of these is to be given to hospitality. Titus 1:8 says an elder must be a lover of hospitality. This means to welcome into one's home those who are in need. It is to show Christian kindness by sharing one's food and shelter. Hospitality should be shown toward all men, but especially toward fellow-Christians (Gal. 6:10). Rom. 12:13 says, "Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality." Heb. 13:2 says, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." The verse refers to the time when Abraham was hospitable to strangers who actually were angels (Gen. 18:1-8). I John 3:17 teaches, "But whoso hath this world's goods and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" I Pet. 4:9 says, "Use hospitality one to another without grudging." An elder must

be given to hospitality.

2. *Apt to teach.* The word “apt” means “qualified and willing.” An elder must be a well-qualified Bible teacher. This comes from careful study, diligent preparation, and much experience at teaching. An evangelist must also be apt to teach (II Tim. 2:24). Christianity is a taught religion. Jesus said to teach all nations, baptize people, and then teach them again (Matt. 28: 19, 20). Jesus said that God draws people to Christ by hearing and learning (John 6:44, 45). Paul told Timothy to teach the things which he had learned to faithful men who would be able to teach others also (II Tim. 2:2). The early church ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ (Acts 5:42). The Hebrew Christians should have been teachers, but they still required someone to teach them the first principles of God’s word (Heb. 5:12). These scriptures show the great importance of good teaching and good teachers in the church. An elder must be a good example before others by being a good and capable teacher of the Word of God. He must be able to feed the flock (Acts 20:28). He will be required to overcome error and sin in the church by strong teaching. He must be apt to teach.

3. *Not given to wine.* This means that an elder must not practice drunkenness or

anything which leads to drunkenness. Paul said that he would not be brought under the power of anything (I Cor. 6:12). He said that drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:10). Drunkards have poverty, woe, sorrow, contentions, babbling, wounds without cause, and redness of eyes (Prov. 23:21, 29-35). Wine which moves by itself also bites like a serpent and stings like an adder. This is wine which causes drunkenness. Wine may be properly used in communion (Matt. 26:29). It may also be used for medicine (I Tim. 5:23). But taking wine which leads one to drunkenness is sinful. Elders must show a good example to the church in not being given to wine.

4. *No striker.* An elder is not one who strikes others. He is able to influence others without floggings. Never should a Christian strike anyone. Jesus drove animals out of the temple with a whip (John 2:15). Parents must whip their children for chastening (Prov. 13:24). But elders use the power of their example instead of a rod or whip. Physical punishment is used by governments (Rom. 13:3, 4). But the kingdom of Christ is not ruled by the sword (Matt. 26:51, 52). The Word of God is a much more powerful sword than any physical one (Heb. 4:12). Turning another cheek to one who strikes us will conquer an enemy much better than violence

(Matt. 5:39). Elders are examples to other Christians by refusing to be strikers.

5. *Not greedy of filthy lucre.* An elder is not covetous. Filthy lucre is money or worldly gain. A covetous man is one who thinks that his life consists of the abundance of the things which he possesses (Luke 12:15). He lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God (Luke 12:21). Jesus said we cannot serve God and money (Matt. 6:24). Covetous men are idolaters (Col. 3:5). They will not enter heaven (I Cor. 6:9, 10). They must be disfellowshipped from the church (I Cor. 5:11). Christians do not seek to be rich. Their greatest gain is godliness. Having food and clothes they are content. They keep themselves from the temptation and trap of riches which drown men in destruction. They know that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil and leads men to err from the faith and pierce themselves through with many sorrows (I Tim. 6:6-10). A Christian's reward is in heaven (Matt. 5:12). He avoids the selfishness and greed which the love of money brings. Elders must be men who have set a strong example in being free from the love of money and worldly things. They are not greedy of filthy lucre.

6. *Patient.* An elder is gentle and patient. He is reasonable and kind. He bears

burdens without anger. He does not easily give up under discouragement. He is steady and steadfast. Patience must be added to every Christian's life (II Pet. 1:6). The trying of faith works patience (James 1:3). Bearing up under hardships brings confidence in God. Because of an elder's patience he becomes capable of encouraging others in their troubles. Because he is gentle and reasonable, members often depend upon him for advice in temptation. He helps keep church discussions from becoming quarrels. He makes the congregation steady and settled. Patience is a very excellent trait and badly needed in every Christian. Elders are examples in patience.

### Questions

1. Give a short meaning of hospitality \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. It is for \_\_\_\_\_ , but especially for whom? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Give a short meaning of "apt to teach." \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. List 7 verses on "teaching" \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Name 2 proper uses of wine \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What is a "striker?" \_\_\_\_\_
7. Name 2 proper examples of striking \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



8. What is filthy lucre? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Name 7 scriptures on “coveteous” \_\_\_\_\_
10. What is “patience?” \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 24

### QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS (III)

#### OUTLINE

1. *Not a brawler (not soon angry).*
2. *Ruleth well his own house.*
3. *Having faithful children.*
4. *Not a novice.*
5. *Good report from without.*
6. *A steward of God.*

#### DISCUSSION

1. *Not a brawler (not soon angry).* I Tim. 3:3 says that an elder must not be a brawler. Titus 1:7 says he must be a man who is not quarrelsome. He controls his temper. He does not speak or act with anger. He is peaceable and peace-making. Jesus blessed peacemakers (Matt. 5:9). Christians are to live peaceably with all men

(Rom. 12:18). They have godly wisdom which gives them gentleness and mercy. They sow in peace the fruit of righteousness. They make peace (James 3:17, 18). We are commanded: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:31, 32). We are told to be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19). A contentious man is one who loves strife. He is known for bringing disorder and quarreling. An elder is selected as an example of peaceableness and gentleness. He is not a brawler nor soon angry.

2. *Ruleth well his own house.* An elder is a good husband and father. His good character has influenced his family for godliness. A man's family sees and knows him better than anyone. Therefore, they are either a good or a bad recommendation of his character. I Tim. 3:5 says that if a man does not know how to rule his own house, he cannot take care of the church of God. The home and the church are conducted upon Christian principles. A man's example and ability are able to be known by his family. If a man has been unable to influence well his family, he has shown himself unable to qualify as an elder.

Cornelius feared God with all his house (Acts 10:2). His family respected him and followed his example in wanting to do right. An elder must order well his family so as to be able to advise others who will need his help in family troubles. The priest Eli was punished because he did not discipline his sons well (I Sam. 3:13). Men, therefore, must first prove themselves in their own homes so as to qualify as overseers in God's family, the church.

3. *Having faithful children.* This continues the requirement discussed above. An elder's children must be "in subjection with all gravity" (I Tim. 3:4). They must be "faithful children not accused of riot or unruly" (Titus 1:6). An elder's children, then, can help to qualify or to disqualify him. Fathers are not to provoke their children to wrath but must bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). A father shows how well he can teach and discipline others by how he instructs his own children. He must not oversee in such a way as to bring wrath but so as to nurture and chasten with great love and care. Leadership as a father tests a man's leadership as an elder. If a man's children are riotous and unruly, this shows that the father does not know how to produce subjection. He is therefore not qualified to

oversee a congregation. An elder must have faithful children in subjection with all gravity.

4. *Not a novice.* An elder cannot be a beginner. A novice is one who is inexperienced and incapable because of immaturity. The word “elder” itself means a person of maturity and experience. A newly converted member cannot be an elder. A novice is in danger of being lifted up with pride and falling into the condemnation of the devil (I Tim. 3:6). He is not yet ready for leadership. The Bible does not tell the number of years required for maturity, but it does tell the characteristics of maturity. One man might develop these traits in a few years, while it might take many years for another. A young man needs age and experience to give him wisdom. An elder is not a novice or beginner.

5. *Good report from without.* An elder must have a good name from non-members (I Tim. 3:7). His reputation must be above reproach even from outsiders. People with whom he works and friends and acquaintances will respect his good character. He will be a light to those in darkness (Matt. 5:14). He lets his light shine so men may see his good works and glorify God (Matt. 5:16). Even those who do not believe will honor his good life. Non-Christians are always watching to accuse us. But when they

give respect to a true Christian's life instead of accusation, it speaks well for that Christian. Such a man must an elder be. He will be known for his good life in the community where he lives. This is the meaning of having a good report from them that are without.

6. *A steward of God.* Titus 1:7 says that an elder must be blameless as a steward of God. A steward is one who is left in charge of valuables. He is a caretaker of precious possessions. He has the responsibility of caring for the possessions of his master. It is required that a steward always be faithful (I Cor. 4:2). The valuables left in an elder's charge are the precious souls of the members (Heb. 13:17). He must guard them as one who shall give an account. He has been entrusted with the most valuable possessions on earth (Matt. 16:26). His responsibility is great. Therefore, to be an elder a man must know how to be faithful under heavy responsibilities. He must be trustworthy with precious possessions which belong to others. He must feel strongly his accountability. An elder must be experienced as a faithful steward of God.

### Questions

1. What is a brawler? \_\_\_\_\_

2. A contentious man loves \_\_\_\_\_
3. Who knows a man's character better than anyone? \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_ feared God with all his \_\_\_\_\_
5. List 3 scriptures about faithful children:  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. A novice is a \_\_\_\_\_
7. What sin endangers a novice? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Who are "those without?" \_\_\_\_\_
9. What is a steward? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What is the most valuable possession? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 25

### QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS (IV)

#### OUTLINE

1. *Not self-willed.*
2. *A lover of good men.*
3. *Just.*
4. *Holy.*
5. *Temperate.*
6. *Holding fast the Word.*

#### DISCUSSION

1. *Not self-willed.* An elder cannot be

self-willed (Titus 1:7). He must not be selfish or stubborn. He is willing to give over his personal desires instead of demanding his own way. The ungodly and worldly man is self-willed (II Pet. 2:10), but an elder must not be. He does nothing through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind he esteems others better than himself. He is interested in the affairs of others and not only in his own things (Phil. 2:3, 4). He is not one who loves to have the preeminence (III John 9). A self-willed member can spoil a congregation. He refuses to cooperate unless he himself is pleased. He thinks the whole church should center in himself. But elders who rule the church cannot be this type of person. Their rule is by example and humility and not by stubbornness. A selfish leader causes no one to want to follow. The reason Jesus is such a great leader is His unselfishness and humility. Even with all His authority and power, He did not seek His own way. As shepherds under the Chief Shepherd, elders must follow His example. Nothing is more desperately needed in the church than humility. Elders show the way of unselfishness and meekness. They are not self-willed.

2. *A lover of good men.* An elder loves all that is good and upright (Titus 1:8). He

hates all that is evil (Rom. 12:9). He loves good people as associates. Evil companions corrupt good morals (I Cor. 15:33). He loves good places and things. He abstains from every form of evil (I Thess. 5:21, 22), and holds fast to that which is good. His delight is in godliness. Much can be learned about a man by learning what he delights in. We can know much of the character of a person by knowing what kind of companions and activities he desires. A man qualified to be an elder must be a lover of good men and of things that are right.

3. *Just.* An elder is fair, honest, or just (Titus 1:8). His dealings are always upright. He does not show partiality by favoring one member over another. He allows no corruption to persuade him to do otherwise. His judgments and decisions are always in fairness and honesty. He uses his mind in matters that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, and virtuous (Phil. 4:8). In his work as overseer he will have many temptations to corruption. Ungodly members or prejudiced non-members will seek to sway his mind. He will often wish to favor his relatives or friend in church matters. He will find that it is often very difficult to know what is fair and then even harder to do what is fair. But he must be a man in whom the members can have confidence. They must know that in him they will



always be treated squarely. This is what it means to be just.

4. *Holy.* An elder is holy (Titus 1:8). His life is pure. It is dedicated. His time and efforts are set apart to a separate use. His body is presented to God as a living and holy sacrifice (Rom. 12:1). He does not defile himself with corrupt habits, for the Holy Spirit dwells in the temple of his body (I Cor. 3:16, 17). As an overseer he seeks to present the church to Christ as a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:27). He lifts up holy hands in prayer (I Tim. 2:8). He knows that he is called unto a holy calling (II Tim. 1:9). He leads others to holiness because he is holy.

5. *Temperate.* An elder is temperate or self-controlled (Titus 1:8). He exercises self-discipline. He does not allow himself to intemperance and excess. The Gospel is a message of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come (Acts 24:25). Just as a runner must be temperate to prepare for a race, so must a Christian be, but for an incorruptible instead of a corruptible crown (I Cor. 9:25). We must keep ourselves under control and bring our bodies into subjection lest after preaching to others we

ourselves be lost (I Cor. 9:27). The Holy Spirit produces temperance as one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23). An elder is capable with God's help of controlling his temper and his appetites. His life is one of restraint. He never allows himself to lose control. How badly do the churches need examples of temperance in their elders!

6. *Holding fast the Word.* Titus 1:9 teaches that an elder must hold fast to the faithful Word that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. This is further instruction on being "apt to teach." He must be capable of teaching unbelievers as well as believers. He must know false doctrines and be able to refute them. He must be qualified to meet opposition with the Word of God and with a spirit of exhortation. This requires that an elder be firmly taught in sound doctrine (II Tim. 1:13). He should be so well grounded that all oppositions cannot move him away. He must be a firm yet kind and forceful teacher. This is holding fast to the faithful Word of God.

This completes the study of the listed qualifications of elders. But a final point is learned from I Tim. 3:10 which shows that elders as well as deacons must first be "proved." This means that these traits studied above must be

clearly seen in any candidate. The whole church should have witnessed these qualities of life shown and proved many times in a prospective elder. This tells again that qualifying to be an elder is a process which takes time. Enough time is required so that the church is convinced of these qualifications. A man cannot appear to put on these traits in a short while. This is pretense. He must rather have demonstrated and exhibited them so that they are proved. They must certainly and sincerely be a part of his character. Becoming an elder is surely possible, but not easy. The requirements are inward as well as outward. No other office or officer of any kind must meet up to such a standard. But this is because no other office is so important.

### Questions

1. Give 2 words explaining "self-willed."  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Give 4 references on "not self-willed."  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What does an elder love? \_\_\_\_\_ What does he hate? \_\_\_\_\_
4. A man's companions tell much of his  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Give 3 words meaning "just." \_\_\_\_\_
6. Give 2 words meaning "holy." \_\_\_\_\_

7. Give 6 references on holiness: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Give 2 words for “temperate” \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. An elder must be able to teach \_\_\_\_\_  
as well as believers.
10. What is it to be first “proved?” \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 26

### THE QUALIFICATIONS AND WORK OF DEACONS

#### OUTLINE

1. *Their position*
2. *Their work*
3. *Their qualifications*

#### DISCUSSION

1. *Their position.* Another officer in New Testament congregations was the deacon. After stating the qualifications of elders, the Bible also gives the requirements for deacons (I Tim. 3:8-13). Verse 10 says, “Let them use the office

of a deacon.” Deacons, then, were officers in the Lord’s church. In Phil. 1:1 the apostle Paul addresses his letter to the saints (or members) at Philippi “with the bishops and deacons.” This shows that deacons served as officers with the elders (or bishops) in the leadership of the congregation. From these verses we learn that the office of deacon is another office in a congregation and that it is a different office from that of elder. In Acts 6:1-6 we learn of the selection of men in the Jerusalem church to take care of feeding and assisting needy members. Their work was to be the “daily ministration” to the widows and other needy members (Acts 6:1). The apostles needed someone to “serve tables” (Acts 6:2) in their place. These words “ministration” and “serve” are the same Greek word that the word “deacon” comes from. This tells us that the seven men which were chosen were deacons in the first congregation. The office of deacon, therefore, is an important and necessary position in a congregation of the Lord’s church.

2. *Their work.* Deacons are never called “overseers” of the church. The elders were the overseers (I Pet. 5:1, 2). They are never told to “rule,” although elders are to “rule well” (I Tim. 5:17). The work of deacons is a different work from elders. Since the word “deacon” means “to

serve," we find that deacons are "servants" of the church. Their part is not oversight but assistance. As the first deacons were selected to assist the apostles, present-day deacons will assist the elders, who are the spiritual overseers today. Their function is to cause the congregation's work and worship to run smoothly and efficiently. Wherever possible they will relieve the elders to do more important work which only elders can do. Two of the Jerusalem deacons also did preaching as evangelists (Stephen and Philip). But this will not always be true of every deacon. A deacon's work is to assist the elders of a congregation so as to keep them from becoming over-burdened with matters which other men can handle. As was true with elders, there were always "deacons" instead of "a deacon" in each church. No deacon had more importance than other deacons. They were all humble servants of the congregation and assistants of the elders.

3. *Their qualifications.* All officers in the Lord's church must be examples, as Jesus, the head, is the great example. Therefore a man must possess certain qualifications as an example in order to be appointed as a deacon. The Jerusalem deacons were selected because they were "men of honest report full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom" (Acts 6:3). They were also "full

of faith and power" (Acts 6:5, 8). Their "honest report" was a good name and reputation within and without the church. Being "full of the Holy Ghost" was seen in the fruits of the Spirit in a holy life. Their "wisdom" was practical good sense and careful judgment in their work. By being "full of faith and power" they were men of strong trust and confidence in God, and therefore men of power and influence which this faith brings. I Tim. 3:8-13 gives a more complete list of qualifications, where we learn that a deacon must be "grave" or serious and sensible. He must not be "double-tongued" or two-faced, speaking different things instead of only the truth. "Not given to much wine" and "not greedy of filthy lucre" mean not given to drunkenness or covetousness as discussed under the elders. "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience" is to join a good and pure life together with Gospel teaching which enables one to have a clear conscience. Deacons must also first be "proved" and be "blameless" as were the elders. Also like elders they must be the "husbands of one wife" and "ruling their children and their own houses well." Their wives must be "grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things." This shows the importance of good faithful Christian women as wives of elders and deacons. They must not be careless gossipers

but must do their part thoughtfully and faithfully to encourage and help their husbands. If in these ways a man shows himself a spiritual example to the congregation, he is qualified to be a deacon in the church.

The question may be asked whether deacons may be appointed in a congregation where there are no elders. The answer is "no" for these reasons: (1) There is no Bible example of it. Instead, elders were always appointed first (Acts 14:23) and deacons are always mentioned together with elders (Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:1-13), except in Jerusalem where the apostles apparently served as elders. (2) Since deacons are assistants to elders, it is impossible to be an assistant when there are no elders to assist. (3) If deacons are mistakenly appointed where there are no elders, they will likely try to rule the church and usurp the place of elders. For these reasons deacons may serve only where elders have been appointed. But elders may serve where no deacons are yet qualified, as their work is not under the deacons (Acts 14:23).

### Questions

1. Do deacons have an office? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Were the men selected in Act 6 deacons?  
\_\_\_\_\_ .



3. The work of deacons is not to \_\_\_\_\_  
but to \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Do we ever read of "the deacon" of a church? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Name 2 Bible deacons \_\_\_\_\_
6. Like elders and like Christ, deacons are able to lead because they are \_\_\_\_\_
7. The first deacons were full of what four things? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Give 4 qualifications of a deacon's wife:  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. May a church have deacons with no elders?  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. List 3 references that discuss deacons:  
\_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 27

### HOW OFFICERS ARE NOT TO BE SELECTED

#### OUTLINE

1. *First member*
2. *Most wealthy member*
3. *"Acting" elder*
4. *Politicking*
5. *Evangelist's favorite*
6. *Any method except exemplarship.*

## DISCUSSION

1. *First member.* In order to clearly see how officers are to be selected, it is good to first see some ways in which they are not to be selected. These are men's methods and not God's. They are changes and corruptions of God's plan. One such method is appointing the first member, sometimes called the "charter member" or members, of the church. The man who brought the preacher to the village often thinks of himself as important enough to be an elder. But we never read of "charter members" in the Bible. Being the first member of a congregation does not make one prominent. Being blessed providentially to have a part in beginning a church does not make a person an elder or deacon.

2. *Most wealthy member.* Often a member with more money or possessions is selected as an elder. The congregation may feel that to honor him will cause him to contribute more. They may also fear him because of his worldly power. But the Bible warns against riches (I Tim. 6:17). An elder cannot be covetous or greedy of filthy lucre (I Tim. 3:3). A man is not to seek the work of an elder for filthy lucre's sake (I Pet. 5:2). Being a worldly leader does not make one a spiritual leader, and it often hinders. Having

earthly possessions does not mean that a man is rich toward God (Luke 12:21). Many are rich materially but wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked spiritually (Rev. 3:17). Physical wealth does not qualify one as an elder or deacon.

3. *“Acting” elder.* Many men call themselves “acting elders.” This means that they are acting like elders when they are not. A man may call himself an elder for a long time and thus feel that he should be appointed when elders are selected. But “acting elders” pervert and corrupt the plan of God. God’s will is that officers be selected because of their qualifications, but “acting elders” try to have an elder’s blessings and honors without meeting the requirements. It is like pretending to be a Christian without having obeyed the commands which make one a Christian. If someone began calling himself an “acting Christian” although he were not, what would the church do? They would reject him as a pretender. Likewise must “acting elders” be rejected. Appointing “acting elders” is adding to God’s Word (Rev. 22:18). It is perverting the Gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:7, 8). It is a false plan to replace God’s plan for appointing elders and deacons.

4. *Politicking.* Sometimes politics enters into the selection of church officers. Members

are tempted to mix political methods with scriptural methods. They may do campaigning and canvassing just as if they were seeking votes. Some churches might even vote for their officers. Bribes may be given or threatening may be used. But the church is no place for political action. The methods used in selecting government officers are altogether different from those to select spiritual officers. A man who is qualified to be an elder does not need to try to prove his qualifications to others. He has no need to make speeches and boast of himself. The church will already know his life and know whether he is qualified. Furthermore, he is not in competition with other men. All qualified men should be appointed, and none is defeated because another is selected. Elders are not selected by voting but by appointment. Politicking is not God's plan for making elders and deacons.

5. *Evangelist's favorite.* The preacher working with the church selecting elders may be tempted strongly to choose his favorite man for appointment. This man may be one who has given the evangelist many favors. The preacher may feel that he should reward or repay the man for his kindness to him. Or an evangelist may wish to select someone who will be "in cahoots" with him to run the church as he wants it run. He

may agree to appoint an elder if the elder will do as the preacher demands in the future. In these and many other ways an evangelist will be tempted to be influenced. But in so doing he is departing from God's standard of impartiality (Acts 10:34). The preacher is becoming a respecter of persons. He is being guilty of showing favoritism. Being the evangelist's favorite should not qualify a man as an officer in the church.

6. *Any method except exampleship.* Of course, this lesson cannot possibly mention all the dishonest and mistaken ways of selecting elders. But it can say that any other method than God's plan of exampleship is a false plan. Any process of appointing men to be officers that does not depend entirely upon their qualifications is unscriptural and wrong. Any consideration entering in that is not a matter of a man's Christian character and ability is a false basis of selection. God makes officers by exampleship: let not men's plans try to change this.

### Questions

1. Does the Bible mention "charter members?" \_\_\_\_\_
2. Does the Bible mention "acting elders?"  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Earthly riches do not make one rich toward \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. Is an “acting elder” like an “acting Christian?” \_\_\_\_\_
5. Name 4 methods used in politicking \_\_\_\_\_
6. Is there competition in selecting church officers? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What reference says God is not a respecter of persons? \_\_\_\_\_
8. One word to describe God’s plan of selection is \_\_\_\_\_ .
9. Name 2 references against changing God’s plan \_\_\_\_\_
10. Do members vote for church officers? \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 28

### HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKES ELDERS

#### OUTLINE

1. *Proper teaching*
2. *Proper desire*
3. *Proper proving*
4. *Looking out men*
5. *Appointing or ordaining*
6. *Recognizing by church*

## DISCUSSION

1. *Proper teaching.* Christianity is a taught religion (John 6:45). Believers are taught before baptism and taught after baptism (Matt. 28:19, 20). The qualifying and selecting of elders requires much long and careful teaching. The Holy Spirit makes men overseers (Acts 20:28). The way that the Holy Spirit makes elders is by the Bible which is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). The Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures which provide the teaching that makes men elders in the church. But this method can only be effective if the Bible is taught. It is necessary, therefore, that God's instructions which will make men elders be studied in every congregation. The Bible teaching on church organization must be thoroughly understood. Each member must know the position and work of the officers. Many classes, private lessons, and sermons must be taught to prepare the church for proper government. Without proper instruction there cannot be proper organization. Scriptural teaching is the beginning step toward scriptural government. Good understanding is the foundation of good organization. The Holy Spirit begins to make men elders by proper teaching.

2. *Proper desire.* The second step is a proper response by those who are taught. It is

God that works in Christians both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). When members are taught God's will they react by desiring to do His will. The beginning of the list of an elder's qualifications says, "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work" (I Tim. 3:1). As a man learns the characteristics of a mature Christian he strives to attain them. He develops a strong desire to be a strong Christian, able to help others to follow Christ. In this way the Holy Spirit is bringing forth fruits of Christian character (Gal. 5:22, 23). But the Holy Spirit is not the only one who places the desire to be an elder in a man. Satan also gives men the desire, but for a different motive. The devil creates a desire for prominence and vainglory or even for money as men consider the eldership. Therefore, not every desire to be an elder is a proper desire. But if men seek the office because they want a Christ-like character, because they want the fruits of the Spirit, then the Holy Spirit is leading them toward becoming elders. This proper desire is an important step toward becoming an elder.

3. *Proper proving.* Church officers must first be proved (I Tim. 3:10). This is the third way that the Holy Spirit makes elders. A man's proper understanding and proper desire lead him to *develop himself into a full grown Christian.*



His growth and ability come to be seen by other members. When a man takes heed to his life and to his teaching, his progress appears unto all (I Tim. 4:15). As stated before, this process takes time. Spiritual maturity does not come quickly. Years of study, prayer, and growth are necessary. Much experience is needed to qualify one as a Christian leader and teacher. During these years a man is proving himself, that is, he is developing Christian traits which all can see. As a result, other members come to know his qualities as a Christian example and leader. The qualifications of an elder are gradually being acquired and seen. This is the proper proving of a man qualified as an elder.

4. *Looking out men.* The apostles in Jerusalem commanded that the congregation “look out” a number of men before selection was made of the first deacons (Acts 6:3). This is the fourth step whereby the Holy Spirit makes elders. Qualified men must be chosen out of the congregation so as to be considered in view of possible selection. Notice that this step is for the congregation to take. The whole church, after proper teaching, is to search out from its own members those mature men who meet the requirements to be officers. In this way the members themselves, rather than someone over them, select their own officers (Acts 6:5). They choose

out the men whom they have seen proved in their midst. They select the ones whom they are glad to follow. They name those whom they will be happy to imitate in order to be more Christ-like. This is a very important step. The Holy Spirit directs the process through the scriptures in the hearts of the members. Their choice is according to words inspired by God's Spirit. They are following God's wisdom found in God's Word (Col. 1:9). They pray that God will grant His wisdom (James 1:5). By prayer they ask God to overrule their choice by His providence (Acts 1:24). There is no miracle performed to indicate the choices, but the Holy Spirit is nevertheless to be the guide through God's Word. The names of the men who have been searched out are then read and recorded before the assembly. The whole church sees and knows the list of those who are candidates. This is what is meant by "looking out" men.

5. *Appointing or ordaining.* The Bible says that elders are to be "ordained" (Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23). The Revised Version says "appointed." These words mean to designate or introduce. The meaning of ordaining has been corrupted by many denominational churches. With them it means licensing a person to hold a position in the "clergy." But the Bible never mentions a "clergy" nor a "clergy license."

Ordaining in a New Testament congregation was simply the pointing out of the officers which the people themselves had chosen. It was done by the evangelist (Titus 1:5), since he was the spokesman for the congregation before elders had been appointed. But the choice was not the preacher's choice. The selection was not done by him. This is not the meaning of ordaining. The evangelist only voices the choice already made by the whole church in looking out and approving their leaders. After looking out the qualified men, the congregation has allowed itself time to approve or disapprove the candidates. There is no definite method for this except for each member to consider and reconsider each candidate in the light of the Bible qualifications and then to indicate approval or disapproval. The approving of the candidates being considered may take some weeks in order to be thorough and complete. But when the officers have finally been approved, their selection is made known in a public way before the church by the evangelist or some other spokesman. This is known as appointing or ordaining officers.

6. *Recognizing by the church.* After elders have been considered, approved, and appointed by the congregation, there remains only the recognizing of the new officers by the church.

The first deacons were “set forth” before the apostles who prayed and laid hands upon them. The apostles in the days of miracles gave the miraculous power of the Spirit by laying on their hands (Acts 8:18). But since there are no apostles and no miracles today, the laying on of hands does not serve this purpose. But the church at Antioch laid their hands on Barnabas and Saul to show their approval of them and to promise their cooperation (Acts 13:1-3). Laying on of hands can serve this purpose today. It is in order (though not essential) to recognize new officers in this manner and thus show the approval and submission of the church. In some public way the church should recognize its new elders, pray for them, and pledge them confidence and subjection. This service should be simple and meaningful. It must not be corrupted into a celebration or a meaningless ceremony. There is no reason for gifts or feasting. It should simply be the time when the church publicly recognizes its officers.

### Questions

1. The Holy Spirit teaches the church through the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Name 2 persons who give desires \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. As the church watches a man's maturity, he is being \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The fourth step is to \_\_\_\_\_ qualified men.
5. Who "looks out" these men? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Give 3 words for "ordain" \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Who actually appoints elders through the preacher? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Before ordaining, the church either \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ its candidates.
9. Should hands be laid on today to give miracles? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Some way should be used to publicly show the church's \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 29

### GOD'S CHARGE TO ELDERS

#### OUTLINE

1. *Be examples to the flock*
2. *Feed the flock*
3. *Shepherd the flock*
4. *Take the oversight*
5. *Rule well*
6. *Watch in behalf of souls*

## DISCUSSION

Having studied the qualifications of elders, we now study their work. This will be seen in the charge which God gives to them which shows their duty. By knowing what elders are to do, we can better see what elders must be.

1. *Be examples to the flock.* Although these lessons have already shown that elders must be examples, this great truth must be emphasized again. Nothing is more important in an elder's work than his example. All of the qualifications are based upon this foundation. This is why the elders are charged in I Pet. 5:3. "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." A leader who lords over his followers does not do what God wants done. Kings may force their will upon their subjects, but this type of rule does not accomplish God's purpose for Christians. God's plan of leading and following is the greatest and highest plan. It is not based upon force but love. It does not depend upon physical power but upon exampleship. God's form of leadership is such that followers want to imitate their leaders. Thus elders must take heed first to themselves and then to the flock (Acts 20:28). They must show to the church a proper example which the members will be happy to follow. Elders must not be lords over the

church but be examples to the flock.

2. *Feed the flock.* A second charge to elders is to “feed the flock of God which is among you” (I Pet. 5:2). A large part of the elders’ duty is to feed or teach the church. The Word of God is food for Christians. It will build them up spiritually (Acts 20:32). Young converts need milk in order to grow (I Pet. 2:2). Others need strong meat from the Word of righteousness (Heb. 5:12-14). Elders must be able to provide food for younger and for older Christians. They will teach the scriptures themselves, for they must be “apt to teach” (I Tim. 3:2). But they will also oversee the teachings of other teachers by encouraging them and providing them with teaching helps. It is a serious responsibility to be in charge of providing spiritual food for the church, much more serious than providing physical food for a family. If this is done well the church will grow spiritually, but if the elders fail, the church will weaken and die. Proper spiritual worship is also food for a Christian’s soul. When elders do not provide rich and nourishing worship services, the members grow sick and sleep spiritually (I Cor. 11:30). God, therefore, charges elders to feed the flock of God by providing spiritual food well prepared for their souls.

3. *Shepherd the flock.* In addition to

feeding the flock the elders are charged also with shepherding it. They are “to take heed” to the flock as shepherds over it (Acts 20:28). The Greek word here for “feed the flock” really means to “act as a shepherd over the flock.” Shepherding the flock means to take gentle care of it. In Bible times shepherds lived with their sheep. They knew each one’s weaknesses and loved every animal. At night the shepherd protected the flock, and by day he led them in the proper paths. If one became lost, he searched for it. If one became sick or hurt, he rubbed oil in its wounds and nursed it back to health. The shepherd always led his sheep; he never drove them. He was always in front calling them and showing them the way. They knew his voice and gladly followed because they knew he loved them and gave them what was best. In these ways must the elders shepherd the flock of God spiritually. They must know and love each member. They must protect, lead, and provide for the flock. They must search for the wandering ones and care for the weak ones. The elders will always be out in front of the church to show the way, rather than behind it to drive it. They will lead in such a way that the congregation will joyfully follow, knowing that it is for their own good to do so. By reading Psalm 23 we learn how God shepherds



His sheep and how gently and carefully He means for elders also to nourish and sustain His flock. Elders are charged with shepherding the flock of God.

4. *Take the oversight.* I Pet. 5:2 says to elders, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." Elders here are charged with taking the oversight and with overseeing for the right purpose and with a proper spirit. The names "bishop" and "overseer" show that elders are to oversee the church. They look out for the church's welfare. They superintend its activities. To oversee is to "see over" or to be looking out over the spiritual need of the church. The Holy Spirit makes elders "overseers over" the church (Acts 20:28). The oversight must not be by constraint, but willingly. That is, elders must choose to be overseers, rather than being forced to against their will. And their oversight will be the type which does not constrain or force the followers, but which leads them to follow willingly. The elders' motives must not be for money or for prominence, but of readiness of mind to obey God. An overseer of any group has a heavier responsibility. But the overseers of the congregations have the heaviest of all responsibilities. The Chief Shepherd will hold them responsible for the welfare and work of the flock.

They must fulfill their duty with great care and must do so in a proper spirit and with a proper motive. This is taking the oversight of the church.

5. *Rule well.* It is the duty of elders also to rule the congregation well (I Tim. 5:17). This passage further describes those who rule as “those who labor in the word and doctrine.” In stating an elder’s qualifications the Bible says, “For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God” (I Tim. 3:5). It is seen, therefore, that by ruling the congregation is meant laboring to teach and take care of the congregation as a father takes care of his family. Ruling does not mean lording oneself over the church (I Pet. 5:3). It means being responsible for the welfare of the church and governing the spiritual affairs of the members. Some men have a mistaken idea of a ruler. They think that a ruler must act like a king who makes slaves of his subjects. This is not true of elders who rule the church. The Bible says they are to rule, meaning that they are not to be careless about the church’s business. They are to be in charge and not to neglect the important affairs which they govern. They have in their charge a serious and heavy responsibility. Those who fulfill this charge well are worthy of “double honor” because the duty is a very heavy one (I Tim. 5:17). Elders are charged to rule well or

rule in this manner the Lord's church.

6. *Watch in behalf of souls.* Elders are to be obeyed and submitted to as those who "have the rule over you for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17). The most serious charge of all is that elders are to watch and give account for the souls of the members. They are like the watchmen on the walls in Israel who had to bear the blood of the people upon their hands if they did not watch and warn of the enemy (Ezek. 3:17-21). What could be more sobering than to have to give account of souls left in one's charge? Not only must the elder watch, but he must give account for the souls of the members in his charge. This type of watching requires constant diligence (I Pet. 5:8). It demands unceasing watchfulness over every member even with tears (Acts 20:31). An elder is charged to watch in behalf of souls and give an account unto God.

### Questions

1. List 2 verses on the exampleship of elders
2. An elder feeds the flock by \_\_\_\_\_  
the flock.

3. Name 2 types of food members need \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Is feeding or teaching the flock the same as shepherding the flock? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Do elders rule in the manner of government rulers? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What 2 words is the word “overseer” made from? \_\_\_\_\_
7. An elder must rule the church as he rules his \_\_\_\_\_.
8. List 4 references on “watching” \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What was the location of the shepherd as he led the flock? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Give another word meaning “to oversee.”  
\_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 30

### DANGER SIGNS IN CHURCH ORGANIZATION

#### OUTLINE

1. *Any organization over the churches.*
2. *Any organization among the churches.*
3. *Outside officers in the churches.*
4. *Any change from independent churches.*

## DISCUSSION

### 1. *Any organization over the churches.*

There are certain signs or indications that tell when church organization is being corrupted. These may be called danger signs, and they indicate that God's plan is being changed. One danger sign is any organization over the churches. This type of organization can be seen in many denominations. There is a central organization larger than the local congregations. It is a central authority with officers for many churches. This larger body makes decisions for the congregations. It selects their preacher, directs their activities, and requires their taxes. Churches of Christ understand that the Bible authorizes no such organization. But this same type of change in organization sometimes creeps in among God's people. For instance, many members want the Bible training colleges to be a mission organization over them. They want the white brethren to select and pay their preacher. When a church problem arises, they want American brethren to tell them what to do. But the Bible schools have no authority over the congregations. The white missionaries cannot make the churches' decisions. There must be complete independence in each congregation. There can be no outside authority or organization over the churches. When any

organization does obtain power over the churches, it is a sign of danger and corruption.

2. *Any organization among the churches.* Because many members have come out of denominations, they wish to organize themselves as they did formerly. To do so they use such means as "Gospel meetings" to band the churches together. They send delegates or committees from each congregation and meet in a general conference. They may select officers, such as chairman, secretary, or treasurer. They may assess money from each church and have a treasury. They may call themselves "the Eastern Ngwa Gospel Meeting," showing a grouping into districts like the denominational synods and districts. There is little or no difference between these organizations and volunteer-type denominational districts. And even though the Gospel meetings may do good works, so do the denominational groups. This does not make them scriptural. There were no organized Gospel meetings in the Bible. They are outgrowths from denominational backgrounds. Members have come out of denominationalism, but denominationalism has not come out of them. Though the changes may be small in the beginning, they are of the type which lead to greater departures. Gospel meetings can be replaced by lectureships at individual churches.

As a result, all of the good points of the former meetings can be kept, while the dangerous and sinful practices are discarded. Brethren will thus still have good Christian fellowship and teaching and will encourage the church where the meetings occur. But they will do away with officers, treasuries, and grouping into districts. They will conduct no business meetings to make decisions for the churches. They will have no assessments or taxes. All of the good remains, but all of the bad is gone. The Bible commands us to prove all things, hold fast to that which is good, and abstain from all appearance of evil (I Thess. 5: 21, 22). When Gospel meetings are proved or examined, they will be rejected so that their evil may be abstained from. But the good may be reproduced in congregational lectureships and can be held fast by those who take part. Any organization among the churches such as organized Gospel meetings is a dangerous and sinful sign of departure from God's Word.

3. *Outside officers in the churches.* Another danger sign in church organization is having outside officers in the churches. These officers may be of the type mentioned in organizations over the churches (above). Or they may be the officers or members from another congregation. If a large, strong church is near a small, weak

congregation, the large one may try to rule the small one. An older church may think that its officers are officers for surrounding younger churches. This is not true. I Pet. 5:2 instructs the elders to "feed the flock which is among you." The elders in a church are to tend the affairs of no other congregation than the one "among them." Acts 20:28 teaches elders to take heed to the flock over which the Holy Spirit had made them overseers. The Holy Spirit had made them overseers only over the congregation at Ephesus (Acts 20:17). This does not mean that elders cannot be interested in other churches or cannot help them and cooperate with them. They certainly can as member in the same body of Christ with them (Eph. 4:16). But these elders help and encourage only as brethren, not as officers over the other churches. Their rule is only in their congregation, and every church conducts its own affairs. Having officers of any kind from outside in a congregation is a danger sign and a corruption of God's plan of church rule.

4. *Any change from independent churches.* God's plan is for autonomous or "self-ruling" churches. Every congregation is independent under Christ. It is organized with no other church or with no organization over the churches. It is in subjection to no other church's officers.



Each church makes its own decisions, does its own work, arranges its own affairs, selects its own officers, contributes its own finances, conducts its own worship, and disciplines its own disorderly members. This is God's plan. This is the Bible way. Any other method or arrangement is a violation of God's authority and a corruption of God's purpose. Let us do God's things in God's way by practicing Bible things in Bible ways. God's way and God's plan is best.

### Questions

1. An indication of corruption may be called a \_\_\_\_\_
2. What organization do many churches want over them? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Do white brethren have authority over the congregations? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Coming out of \_\_\_\_\_ causes many members to want wrong organizations.
5. Name 3 evils of Gospel meetings \_\_\_\_\_
6. What can scripturally replace Gospel meetings? \_\_\_\_\_
7. May one church's officers rule another church? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Elders oversee the flock which is \_\_\_\_\_
9. How many congregations does the Holy Spirit make elders overseers over? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Give two words describing Scriptural churches \_\_\_\_\_

## DANGER SIGNS IN CHURCH ORGANIZATION

1. Any organization with decision-making power over the churches:

### CENTRAL MISSION AUTHORITY

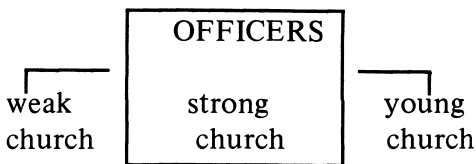
Church	Church	Church

2. Any organizing among congregations (even to do good works) so that officers, treasury, and district-grouping result:

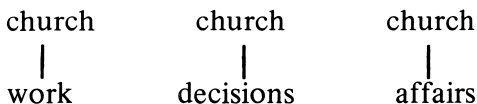
Church	Church	Church

delegates—officers—treasury—district—grouping

3. A church or any of its officers or members beginning to have authority over another church:



4. Any change from God's plan for each church making its own decisions, conducting its own affairs, and doing its own work:



## LESSON 31

### HOW CHURCH GOVERNMENT WAS FIRST CORRUPTED

#### OUTLINE

1. *Bible predictions of departure.*
2. *Lessons from church history.*
3. *Curses upon unfaithful shepherds.*

#### DISCUSSION

1. *Bible predictions of departure.* Our

first lesson said that one reason the study of church organization is important is that the first departures came in church rule. This present lesson will show how these corruptions came. First, we notice the Bible predictions that a falling away would come. The apostle Paul warned the elders from Ephesus that grievous wolves would enter in and spoil the flock. These were to be false teachers, who would draw away followers after them (Acts 20:29, 30). This was a prophecy that the church would be corrupted by false teachers. It is important that Paul said "of your own selves" these false teachers would arise. This meant that apostasy would begin in the churches and from among the elders or leaders. I Tim. 4: 1-4 is another warning that men would depart from the faith. Again false teachers are mentioned as the means by which the falling away would come. In I Cor. 1:10-13 we see that divisions had already begun in the church at Corinth. These divisions had come by members following their leaders rather than following only Christ. Division and corruption were connected with the leadership of the church. Another warning is II Thess. 2:3, 4, which says a falling away would come and the "man of sin" would be revealed. This was to be one who would sit in the temple as a god, showing himself that he is God. The departures were to be caused by ungodly leaders, some in the church

and others without. As long as the leadership of the church remained pure, the church did not fall away. But as the elders and teachers departed from God's Word and from God's plan of organization corruption soon came. The Bible predicted these departures involving the leadership. We see the terrible result in the divisions and false teachings of today.

2. *Lessons from church history.* The Bible closes with a picture of seven congregations in Asia (Rev. 1, 2, 3). Many of these churches had apostatized just as earlier prophecies predicted. But as we continue to study the churches even after the close of the Bible, we see further the warnings of falling away fulfilled. The Bible says that the devil corrupts the church by turning Christians away from the "simplicity that is in Christ" (II Cor. 11:3). This surely happened in the organization of the Lord's church. Men were not content with God's simple plan. Because of their desire for money and prominence, they added to and changed the Bible arrangement. The following is a list of lessons we can learn from church history as we observe the gradual corruptions of the organization of the church: (1) Among the first departures were departures in church government. As the leadership forsook God's way, many errors could easily be brought in. (2) The intentions of many who

departed were good. They did not mean to fall away. They even thought that their changes in the plan of rule would be better. But they exchanged God's way for man's way. (3) The beginnings of the departures were very small. This is usually true. Men "drift" slowly from God's plan but yet are still departing. (4) Once departures began, others necessarily followed. It is as if a small gate is opened, and great crowds of people then rush in. (5) In order to justify later departures, arguments were made from earlier departures. Men would say that because others had done one thing, they would do even more. (6) No great or big changes were made quickly, but small changes were added gradually. Men can see large corruptions which happen all at once. But small changes are overlooked, unnoticed over a longer period of time. (7) Men were not satisfied to have equal authority as elders. They soon chose "city elders," and later "chief elders." (8) Men were not content to have rule in only one church. They soon grouped congregations together under the rule of an eldership. (9) Stronger churches wanted oversight over newer and weaker congregations. (10) Educated men wanted to make decisions for the common men in the churches. (11) Leaders wanted prominence from ordinary members, and so began the "clergy" and "laity." These words are unscriptural terms. (12) The scriptures were considered difficult, and

catechisms were written to explain them. These catechisms soon had equal authority with the Bible. (13) The meetings of elders were used to decide what the members should believe. Their decisions and opinions were then bound upon the churches. (14) The government of the church became mixed with the government of the land. The church thus left its spiritual place and became a political power. Thereafter, many of the state's corruptions were added to the church. These are some of the ways the devil corrupted the simplicity of the organization of the church. We can see in them the Bible prophecies of departure as they were fulfilled. We continue to see these departures carried further in the denominational errors of today.

3. *Curses upon unfaithful shepherds.* If the preceding lessons are to be valuable to us, the leaders of the churches today must take warning. They must not make the same mistakes which these early leaders made. Listen to the Old Testament curses pronounced upon the unfaithful shepherds of the people then. How much greater the woes upon unfaithful shepherds today, "Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord, behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings" (Jer. 23:1, 2). Strong leaders can keep the church from

another departure. Weak leaders will not. God has put a heavy responsibility upon those who lead His people. But He has also offered glorious blessings to faithful elders. I Pet. 5:4 promises to those who properly oversee the flock, "When the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." What a glorious reward shall true and good elders receive from the Great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls (I Pet. 2:25). It will be a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

### Questions

1. List 4 references predicting or describing departures \_\_\_\_\_
2. When the \_\_\_\_\_ departs, the church departs.
3. The devil turns men away from the \_\_\_\_\_ in Christ.
4. Church government departures were among the \_\_\_\_\_
5. The beginnings of departures were \_\_\_\_\_
6. The \_\_\_\_\_ of many were good.
7. Are "clergy" and "laity" Bible words? \_\_\_\_\_
8. The rule of the \_\_\_\_\_ became mixed with the rule of the \_\_\_\_\_
9. What Old Testament passage curses unfaithful pastors? \_\_\_\_\_



10. What passage promises glory to faithful elders? \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON 32

### HOW TO CONDUCT A BUSINESS MEETING

#### DISCUSSION

The present lesson concludes this study of "Scriptural Government of Churches of Christ." But before closing, some practical suggestions for business meetings will be given. Such meetings can be conducted in several good ways. These suggestions are only principles that should be remembered in any procedure that is used. (1) Let all things be done decently and in order (I Cor 14:40). This requires good planning. Preparation should be made ahead for a coming meeting. This verse also requires good order and conduct. One person should speak at a time. Courtesy and respect should be practiced. (2) Each man should in honor prefer one another, each counting others better than himself (Phil. 2:3). This avoids quarreling, stubbornness, and strife. Each man is willing to give up his own opinion or preference to bring about cooperation. (3) Let no man love to have the pre-eminence (III John 9). No man must seek to

have attention or importance for himself. Put away all pride, selfishness, and vainglory. All must clothe themselves with humility, for God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble (I Pet. 5:5). (4) Let each man seek to serve the others and serve the church. Jesus said that the greatest one in His sight is the servant of all (Matt. 20:27). He showed this to us by washing the disciples' feet (John 13:12-15). Every man should enter the business meeting with the desire to be a servant. Each should gladly do any service that will help the church. (5) Open and close each meeting with sincere prayer. In such important times of decision, God's wisdom and providence are sorely needed. He has promised wisdom to those who ask (James 1:5). The prayers should not be meaningless repetitions. They must be fervent and effective pleas to God for help (James 5:16). (6) Let each elder or each man (if there are no elders) take his turn as chairman. This prevents one man from thinking he is a permanent chairman. It gives each one needed experience in leading discussions. And it keeps down strife and jealousy. It is good experience and training for a man to use tact and patience in conducting a good meeting. The job is not easy. The chairman, of course, has no more authority in decisions than the others. It is his work to bring orderliness to the meeting. (7) Someone should write down accurate records of

each meeting. This work could well be taken by turns also. Such a person has no more authority or importance than the others. He merely writes what the meeting tells him to write. He is no officer and has no office. At the close of each meeting the record should be read and approved by all. Then at the beginning of the next meeting it should be read again. All records must be preserved for future reference in case someone questions some decision or action. The record of each meeting should not be long and boring. Have a good plan for the meeting, and do not allow "palaver." Extending meetings too long when nothing is accomplished will kill them in the future. (9) Let every man's voice be heard in discussion. Do not let one man or a few men occupy all the time. Every man should be allowed to express himself freely. (10) The meeting should try to make future plans rather than always settling past troubles. Meetings must be encouraging instead of discouraging. Business meetings should create zeal and enthusiasm. They will do so if conducted properly. Their aim should be to cause every member to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58). (11) No voting is to be practiced. Instead, full discussion should continue until all can come to "the same mind and the same

judgment" (I Cor. 1:10). If a final decision cannot be reached, postpone some matters until the next meeting to allow brethren to come to one accord (Acts 4:32). Agreement can be reached if brethren want to be "like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (Phil. 2:2). Strife among brethren makes our enemies to laugh among themselves (Psa. 80:6). Because Christians are brethren, they can overcome differences and have no strife (Gen. 13:8). They can walk together in agreement (Amos 3:3). A house divided against itself cannot stand (Matt. 12:25). God hates the man who sows discord among brethren (Prov. 6:16, 19). Of all people, Christian brethren, who are members of the same body of Christ, can and must surely work together (I Cor. 12:12, 25). (12) Try to give each member something which he can do in the work of the Lord. Even though a task may be small, it is important for the spiritual exercise of the member. (13) The great object before every meeting should be the building up of the spiritual house of God, the church. Members must never be more interested in the physical house (church building) or any other physical matter. Every decision and every action must be toward the spiritual upbuilding of the church. Denominational plans may build a big physical house, but God's plan builds the spiritual house.

Then the physical house will surely be built in its proper place. (14) The motto of every meeting should be to plan the work and then work the plan. A church which fails to prepare, prepares to fail.

## CONCLUSION

This concludes this discussion on church organization. Much more, of course, could be taught. The Bible is full and complete on every part of God's plan for the church. But it is hoped that this study has caused each reader to want to continue forward and study all that the Bible teaches on this important subject. It is hoped, too, these lessons have brought to each one a desire to completely restore New Testament Christianity. This can surely be done if every part of Christ's plan is followed and if Christ is truly Lord in every matter. The Lord's church cannot be restored unless scriptural organization is restored. But if the simple government and leadership of the New Testament church is reproduced today this will go far in bringing the true church into a present-day reality. The church is like a fine building built according to a fine plan or blueprint. Jesus built His church as He promised (Matt. 16:18). But false teachers tore down the church in many places (Acts 20:

28-30). Now we today must take again the same plan (the New Testament) and follow exactly every part and thereby restore the same spiritual building. Restoring the Lord's plan for pure church organization is an important part of restoring the building. If the Bible plan is followed, God is the author and builder. But if men's ways are substituted, men's churches will result. The Bible warns: "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it" (Psa. 127:1). But let us as Christians, as living stones, build up a spiritual house, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Christ Jesus (I Pet. 2:5).